THE STORY BIBLE

MARGARET SANGSTER

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THE STORY BIBLE

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BY

MARGARET E. SANGSTER

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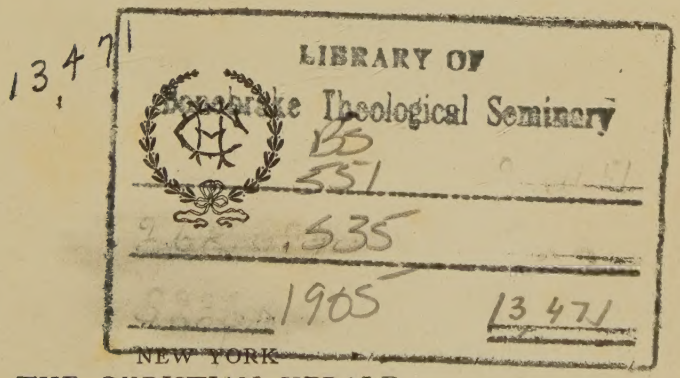
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To one whose unobtrusive goodness
strews flowers on many paths,
HELEN MILLER GOULD,
I dedicate this book with affectionate regard.

SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN

FOREWORD

IN writing the Story Bible it has been my aim so to tell again the tales from Holy Writ familiar through the centuries, that our children of to-day may read and love them. The Bible is a treasury of stories, vivid, dramatic and full of charm. Each story has a hero or a heroine whose name is a household word, whose feats of valor or sacrifices of love stimulate us, as they have stimulated those who have gone before, to live noble lives; to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God. I have disengaged each story from surrounding passages which treat of other affairs so that the story itself may stand out alone, like a gem or a picture. I have arranged the stories in their accustomed Biblical sequence so that they follow the order of the books in the Old and New Testaments and may later introduce their readers to the Bible in whatever version they prefer. These stories have been written with great simplicity that moth-

ers may read them to little children, and older children read them, with pleasure, as they would read a favorite story book.

People who fancy that children do not enjoy good literature are mistaken. Much depends on the early choice for them of what is best. Give a child the best and he will not be contented with the worst. The child delights in brave deeds, in romance, in chivalry, in splendid diction and poetic style. Imaginative literature fascinates children. They cannot have too much of it, from the fairy and folk lore of every nation to the beautiful truth lore scattered for them over the pages of our English Bible. Any group of listening children will hang eagerly on the story of Noah, of Abraham, of Joseph, of David, of Daniel and of the Child who came to earth in the fullness of time, when the Star led the way to the Manger. All these wondrous tales and many more stories are in this volume. I hope it may find its way wherever children meet around the hearth, and that mothers may accept its help in the training of their little ones.

For Sunday afternoons and daily reading, and for quiet hours with father and mother, the Story Bible will prove a standby, the

melody of its pages drawn from the one Book that never goes out of fashion and never fails to carry a heavenly message to old and young.

MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

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THE STORY BIBLE

I

THE STORY OF CREATION

A LONG, long time ago, so very long ago that a child cannot count the years and the oldest man on earth does not know their number, it came to pass that God made this world. In the beginning He created the heavens and the earth. Before this beginning, whenever it was, there was no blue sky, there was no deep sea, there was neither sun nor moon. Where this planet on which now we live goes around the great sun there was only a vast, empty space, or perhaps a great lonesome mist, called chaos, all strange, confused and dim.

Out of this chaos God created the heavens and the earth. To create is to make something and put it where there used to be nothing.

Only God can do this. God looked on the vast, dark, misty space, and His Spirit moved over it, over the face of the dark waters that seemed fast asleep, over the face of chaos.

And then He did the most wonderful thing that even God could do. He spoke one word, gave one command, and the darkness lifted like a curtain that is rolled up and disappears. He said, Let there be light, and there was light. Not gradually, but suddenly, in a quick flash, in an instant, the light chased away the darkness when God called it and bade it come. Light travels faster than almost anything in the universe. It travels as fast as thought. You can think, dear child, as fast as a sunbeam flies, but nothing outside of you can go through the air with the speed of the morning light.

God saw the light, and it was good. So He divided it and made one part Day, which is the part in which we play and work, and another part Night, which is the part in which we sleep and rest.

Next, God made the firmament. Look up and you can see it now. Sometimes white

clouds sail over it like birds. Sometimes black clouds hang low beneath it, and down from them pours the heavy rain or floats the fleecy snow. Clouds are full of vapor and vapor makes rain. The firmament is up yonder. Down below it is the ocean and running into the ocean are the rivers, little and big, carrying their cups of water. The ocean has tides that ebb and flow and the sky is always watching the tides. The ocean sends up mists and the sky sends down rain, and sky and ocean love one another to-day just as they have loved ever since God gave one its work to do here and the other its work to do there. God called the firmament Heaven, and when He had made borders and banks for the sea, He called the dry land Earth.

Next, He covered the land with green waving grass and lovely green herbs and beautiful trees, some for shelter and some for fruit. Every orchard where the blossoms scent the spring air, every clump of trees that gives a pleasant shade, carries our thoughts straight back to the Creation and the goodness of God Who was the first great Gardener. The trees

and the grass were made to bear seed so that they would keep on making the dry land beautiful forever.

Then, dear child, God, being pleased with the green earth, and the sky and the sea, made other lovely things. Do you know

"Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky"?

Certainly you do. Every child learns to repeat this stanza. Well, God made those twinkling stars, and put them where they shine. They are so glad to be there that they cannot help shining, each in its own place. They light the sky with their lamps, North, South, East and West. They keep guard over your little bed at night. You cannot see them when the sun rises; but they are there, shining, just the same; and when night falls out they come, one by one, till there are millions of them, looking down with radiant eyes. God made the sun which is like a great chariot of fire and He made the silver moon that burns

with a softer, tenderer light. The sun by day, the moon by night. In the long ages since they were made they have never stopped burning by day and by night, but they are never tired, nor dull. They keep on shining as God told them to shine.

The earth, being now quite ready for inhabitants, like a house all furnished and waiting for people to move in, God made birds to fly, and fish to swim, and beasts to walk about, and tiny, tiny insects and great ones too, so that the earth was full of glad, living creatures, all happy and fearless; and the waters were full of fish, great and small; and through the air went birds, singing and soaring and hurrying to make nests of their own in the rocks and the tree tops. God saw all these and was pleased with them and gave them His blessing.

But there was yet another thing He needed to do. In this big House of Life that He had made there was nobody to rule, nobody to be overseer for God. The birds and beasts would soon have felt as children do when they have nobody to whom they may run home at night

if God had not created some one better than they, somebody wiser, who might love them and give them names and be their friend.

He made the beasts and the birds, the stars and the sun and the moon, by a word of command. But Man was to be a son of God, to have some of God's power in him, to live in the House of Life with the life of God his Father in his nature.

So God breathed into man the breath of life, and made him a living soul; made him in His own image. He made both man and woman, to be a king and a queen in the great new House of Life, to take care of everything, to enjoy everything, to be perfectly happy all day long, and never afraid of anything night or day.

All this work took six days; not six little days of twenty-four hours each, but six divine days, each one of which may have been as long or as short as God chose to have it.

Then, on the seventh day, or period, God rested. When God rested He gave us then and there the sweet and gracious thought of one day in every seven when we too may rest.

The Sabbath, which some people call the Lord's Day and some Sunday, is another beautiful thing, a gift of God that began to be ours when God made the world.

A very beautiful poem was written by Joseph Addison in the year 1712. I learned to repeat it when I was seven years old. You often hear it sung as an anthem in church. I should not be surprised if you would like to learn it, and so I am inserting the poem before we go to the next chapter:

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty Hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth;

Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball;
What though no real voice nor sound
Amidst their radiant orbs be found;
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing, as they shine,
"The Hand that made us is divine."

II

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

WHEN the world was finished and every bit of it in order, God made, in the very heart of it, a garden just like the gardens that the angels tend in the great world we cannot see, the world where God lives beyond this earth.

This garden was called Eden. It had in it every sweetest rose that ever bloomed and every flower that grew in heaven was transplanted there. No garden has ever been so beautiful as the Garden of Eden, though all our gardens in their summer brightness look something like it. A June day, when the daisies laugh in the sun and the rosebuds unfold, must be a little bit left us from Eden. At least it does no harm to fancy so.

You see it was Earth's very first garden, and JEHOVAH was its Gardener. Four

rivers were around it, and in the midst of it grew trees of every sort, and from their boughs hung most delicious fruit.

You may dream of such a garden some night when you are asleep, for the angels bring sweet dreams to happy children. But none of us, when waking, shall ever see a garden quite so fair as Eden was.

In this garden God placed the first Man and the first woman, Adam and Eve. God told Adam that his part would be to dress and keep the garden; Eve was to help him, and both were to do whatever they wished, eat its fruit, pluck the flowers, go where they chose, and be without any hard labor, because the ground did not need digging and there were no weeds, and the fruit and the flowers were to mean, not trouble to Adam and Eve, but just pleasure.

There was one thing they were told not to do. Only one thing.

In the middle of the garden there was a beautiful tree that God told them never to touch. He did not tell them why they must not touch it. He simply said, Go where you

like, do what you will, but that Tree is My tree. Let it alone.

So parents often tell children not to do something, yet do not tell them why not.

Hundreds of trees were in every direction. Fruits sweet as honey, nuts, spices and balm, and oh! so many vines and flowers! And just a single tree that must be left alone.

My child, were you ever put in a room and told that you might go into every corner but that one spot in the middle you must not cross? If you were, you know how Adam felt, how Eve exclaimed. Eve had more curiosity than Adam. She began to long that she might taste the fruit of that forbidden tree. She longed and longed and looked and looked. As often as she went to walk, she found her feet stepping toward the Tree that was called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Close by this tree was another called the Tree of Life, but Eve did not think much about this, and so she did not want to taste its golden fruit. Nothing had been said to either of them about the Tree of Life; only the other tree near it was forbidden them.

You must know that in those days of the Garden of Eden the beasts and birds could speak quite plainly, so that Adam and Eve knew what they said. After awhile, they lost this power of speech, but they had it then. It was later that an enchantment called Sin stole in and spoiled everything and even laid its wicked spell on the beasts.

So when a serpent, shining and silvery, one morning lifted his glittering crested head and said very softly to Eve, Pray tell me what ails you, and why are you so sad? she was not frightened or surprised.

Has not God told you that you may eat whatever you want in this garden? softly asked the serpent.

Yes, said Eve, except one tree, and that is the one I desire more than everything else. But if we eat of that tree we shall die. I don't know what that means, to die, but it must be something terrible. God Himself told Adam this. God often walks in the Garden in the cool of the day and talks with Adam and me.

Eve looked very wistful. Her eyes were

bright but tears stood in them. Tears, though she was in Eden's Garden!

Now the serpent was really a wicked angel who had taken this shape, a bitter enemy of God, and an enemy of both Eve and her husband Adam. He looked steadily at her, fixing her gaze, and then said:

How can you be so foolish? You did not understand.

The fiend in the serpent's shape glided close to Eve and the music of his voice was like a harp note in the breeze.

Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know, that, in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

What a pity Eve listened. But she did. The Bible says:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took the fruit thereof and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat.

It was natural that Eve should first taste

the fruit, find it very nice, and give some to Adam. He did not object to tasting it, but afterward, a thing I never liked in Adam, he tried to excuse himself, when God reproved him, by saying: The woman Whom Thou gavest me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

This was mean and cowardly in Adam, to put the blame on poor Eve. I suppose he did not think how mean this was.

If you have ever done a thing you knew was wrong, disobeyed your father on purpose, gone where your mother told you not to, or in any way have been wilfully naughty, you have stirred up a sleeping sense inside you, a sense of right and wrong, that we call Conscience.

Conscience is a kind of policeman and when he gets hold of one, there is sure to be trouble. One feels like a prisoner at the bar. A dreadful feeling, a feeling of shame settles down on one, just like a weight. A little sister or a little brother, it makes no matter who it is, who has done what he knew or she knew was forbidden, is ashamed and wants to hide. No-

body may suspect that you are the culprit, but you know it; for you have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and you have brought into the garden of your soul a blight the name of which is Sin.

This is what happened to Adam and Eve. They hid away from God for they felt naked and ashamed. Their innocence was gone. Then Adam meanly blamed poor Eve. Soon they had to go out of Eden into a different world. They had to work hard and the beasts began to be afraid of them. Eden was spoiled and they could not stay there. Nobody can stay in a happy place, when Conscience drives them out, because they have sinned.

As for the serpent, people hate him to this day.

III

ABOUT CAIN AND ABEL

ADAM and Eve were like lost children when they left Eden. They knew not where to go. They had to go, and they went into a strange world. They felt very lonely and sad when Eden lay behind them. But they could not go back, for in the gates of Eden there stood a bright angel with a flaming sword, an angel sent to keep them from eating of that other tree, the Tree of Life.

They went out hand in hand, dressed in coats of skin, into a world where they should find cold and storm and frost and heat, and many things they had known nothing of while they lived in the beautiful garden. But one happy thing that belonged to Eden they took with them when they left it, and that thing was love. People who have true love can stand a good deal of trouble and worry, and I have no doubt that Adam and Eve found plenty to interest and comfort them in their

new sphere. God did not mean them to be miserable all the time.

They were something like Robinson Crusoe on his desert island, except that they did not know half so much as he did. God had told Eve that she would have a great deal of sorrow and hardship and pain, but He told her something else that made her strong enough to bear any pain, just as her daughters have been ever since. She was to be the mother of the race, and no mother is ever sad all the time, because her children make her happy.

Adam knew that he would have to till the ground and that it would not be easy any more because the ground would not go on yielding fruit gladly, as it did in Eden's Garden, but would have to be cultivated by the labor of man. Adam had to fashion spades and rakes and hoes, and to gather seeds and plant them, and to fight a battle with weeds and pests; many a time he had anxious nights and weary days, just as every farmer has. But when the crops came, and his little gardens grew bright with flowers, and the young lambs fed in the green pastures, Adam felt

consoled and gave thanks to God. The curse was like a black cloud that has sunshine breaking through it.

God had not made his lot so hard that Adam could not bear it, although He had driven him forth from Eden. Sometimes at sunset, and in the early morning, there came breezes so fragrant and music so sweet across the fields, that Adam and Eve clung together and worshipped God and said: Surely, this joy has come to us from the Eden of which we were not worthy.

Eve had to learn every sort of womanly art, to find sharp thorns and fibre from which she made thread, and leaves and grasses, so that she could weave and sew.

I knew a little girl who had to work on her sampler every morning when she wanted to go out and play, and once she said, "O how I blame Eve when I have to sew! She was the one who did it first." Poor Eve, to have to bear this blame!

I suppose Eve learned how to cook and how to keep house in the little home she and Adam had, for, though outside of Eden, they began

something very sweet that we have had in all the ages, a home in which live those who love one another. Their home might be in a cave, or in a tent, but it was their home.

Over their home and their love, alas, there always hung a shadow. This shadow slipped in beside them when they were happiest, and went with them when they walked the fields, and tended the young lambs. It was the Shadow of the Fear of Death. They did not know what it meant, but they were afraid of it, and they knew that some day it would come closer and they would have to meet it. The truth was that they had begun to die from the day they had begun to sin, but this is something far too puzzling for children to understand, and you need not worry your little heads about it. Worse things than death are in this world, and when you grow old enough, you will know that death is not a thing to be afraid of, because it opens the door to the happiest life of all, the life that never ends.

You see Eve and Adam did not then know this, nor for a long time after, so they were often afraid.

One morning there was a little newcomer in their home, a beautiful rosy babe whom Eve called Cain. I have gotten a man from the Lord, she said, a son who was to be her pride and joy. After awhile God gave her another son, and she named him Abel. These little brothers grew up and helped their father. Abel was a gentle shepherd who loved to be with the lambs and sheep. Cain preferred to work in the ground and raise grain and fruit. Many years passed by. These two sons of Adam and Eve, who had played together and worked together, at last had a quarrel.

This is the way we are told about it in the Book of Genesis:

In process of time, it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof.

And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering, but unto Cain and his offering, he had not respect.

And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

And the Lord said unto Cain: Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.

That the Lord accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's, I suppose was because of something He saw in their hearts. It may have been that Cain was too proud and haughty, while Abel brought his gifts with a humble heart. However that may be, Cain went away very angry, and the more he thought about it, the more angry he grew, until he fairly hated the innocent Abel. They had words together, hot and angry words, and the end of the matter was that Cain rose up against his brother and slew him. One fierce blow, and Abel lay on the ground white and bleeding. Cain, awed and dismayed, stood surveying what he had done.

Abel, Abel, he called. But Abel did not answer. He was dead. So death came into the world, and the first one who died was murdered by a brother's hand. The first death was not by nature but by envy and malice.

Adam and Eve now knew what was meant by death. As for Cain, God spoke to him by that same voice in the heart which we call Conscience. He tried to put a bold face on the matter, and brazen it out, but it was of no use.

Where is Abel thy brother? said the Lord.

And he said, I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?

And God said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

And now art thou cursed from the earth which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

And Cain said unto the Lord: My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth: and from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. And it shall come to pass that

every one that findeth me shall slay me. Cain was in despair.

I have quoted this just as it is written in the Book because you can understand it, although some of the words are rather long.

To a man like Cain, who loved the ground and cared for the farm, it was a dreadful punishment to have to wander over the earth, to become a tramp going from place to place, afraid that some avenger of blood would kill him. But the Lord did not let anyone kill Cain. He put on him a mark, so that those who saw him went on their way and did not molest him. But his life was far sadder than that of Abel, his brother, who simply had to die in an instant, and with no crime, no dark remorse, no sorrow for an evil he could not undo.

All this happened about a hundred and fifty years after the angel with the flaming sword came to guard the gates of Eden. These two brothers were not the only ones upon the earth. As time passed, the children of Cain became great and mighty. His son Enoch has the fame that belongs to the man who first

built a city, for in the early days people did not live in cities.

It may easily be that Cain learned to desire in his old age a secure life. He went to settle at last in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. I hope that God forgave him for his sin, but in every age that sin has been remembered. No wonder he said: My punishment is greater than I can bear.

One of the grandsons of Cain was a man named Lamech, and he had two very remarkable sons. I want you to know their names. One was Jubal, and the other Tubal-cain; not names that sound very pleasant to us, yet names that can never be forgotten, for Jubal had a soul for music, and heard the melodies that the wind sings in the pine trees, and the brook sings when it goes foaming over the stones. He set these tunes to music. He was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ, the first inventor of musical instruments. His brother was the first to work in brass and iron, the first to learn how to make tools and weapons and to teach others what can be done with metals. Surely these

were wonderful men, these grandchildren of Cain.

Tubal-cain and Jubal had a sister and her name is given. It was Naamah. But what she did, or why she is mentioned, I do not know. I fancy, though, that she believed in her brothers and liked to help them when they were pottering about their inventions, and cheered them up when other people thought they were wasting their time and wondered that they were not chasing beasts in the forests or shooting birds on the wing. No doubt both Jubal and Tubal-cain were fond of their sister Naamah. This might be called a second story of two brothers; these two who lived in such harmony that each did something to make the world better.

Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years. He had many sons and daughters, but we are told only the name of one who was born to Eve after the death of Abel. His name was Seth, and he seems to have had a sweet and reverent nature, and in his days and those of his son men began to call upon the Name of the Lord.

IV

NOAH AND THE ARK

I TOLD you that in the days of Seth men began to call upon the Name of the Lord. After the world began to grow large and populous men forgot God, but Seth and his family kept to the old ways and worshipped JEHOVAH.

The children of Cain were valiant and strong, or clever and pushing, and did many great deeds, but they wandered away from God. Out of this wandering of theirs all their troubles came. They were stubborn and proud and wanted their own way.

The children of Seth, who called upon God, were ready to accept God's way. Among them was a man whose name was Enoch. Enoch was so good a man and loved God so truly that he was said to walk with Him. This is his epitaph: And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. Enoch it is thought never saw the face of death but

was simply caught right up into heaven by some kind angel. He was here one day; the next, without pain or suffering, he was at home with God. He was not here, for God took him away.

A little girl in England came home one day from Sunday School, says the Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, and when her mother asked her what she had learned there replied, "I heard about a man whose name was Enoch, and he took long walks with God. One day he walked so far that he was right by the door of God's house, and God opened it and said, Enoch, come in. And he went in and stayed there all the rest of the time."

Enoch had a son named Methusalah who lived on the earth almost a thousand years, nine hundred and sixty-nine, to be accurate. And after him came Lamech who lived seven hundred and seventy-seven years. Though they lived to a great age, these old fathers of the race had to die at last. No doubt they were quite ready to say good-night and fall asleep.

Lamech's son was Noah, a word which

means rest or comfort. You see they gave Noah a name with a beautiful meaning. He was to have a very eventful life, for Noah was the man whom I must tell you of, now that we have reached the story of the Flood.

Noah was about five hundred years old when God one day told him that he must build an ark or ship. People had multiplied in the world, and many of them had grown very wicked. They had grown so wicked that they had stopped being ashamed and did not care what they did, or how they offended God, and they were all the worse because among them were giants, strong men and brave, and also beautiful women, but all just as bad as bad could be! Noah was different from these people, and he had found favor in the eyes of the Lord. He had three sons whose names were Shem, Ham and Japheth. As God looked down upon the world and saw in it thieves and robbers and murderers and every kind of ruffian and villain, spoiling the bright clean world and marauding everywhere, He determined to send a great flood and destroy everything in the world. The Bible says: It re-

pented the Lord that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him at his heart; and the Lord said: I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast and the creeping thing and the fowls of the air. For it repenteth me that I have made them. They must have been fearfully wicked so to grieve the Lord.

Noah, alone among the children of men, lived a pure life and held fast to his faith in God. So to Noah was given the task of preserving alive one family when all else should be destroyed. And through it to preserve the human race. He was told to build an ark, really to build an immense house that would float. It was made of gopher wood and covered with pitch, inside and out, so that no water could come through it. This ark was to be three hundred cubits high; a very large floating house indeed, in which were to be rooms and compartments. It had no less than three stories, this wonderful ocean vessel in which the first mariner of the ages was to sail. It had only one window in it and only one door. Noah was more than a hundred years

building this ark, and the people came from far and near to look at him and laugh and jeer at his folly while the work went on. He told them what it was for, I am sure, and begged them to repent, but the more he preached the more they laughed. They thought him crazy but he kept right on hammering, sawing and building his ark.

At last the work was done. God had said that the ark was to be built. Noah had believed God, and so he had worked away at the great task when the skies were clear and there was no hint of any coming storm.

The people all about had gone on growing worse and worse. The whole world was filled with their iniquity. To Noah God said:

And behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven.

And everything that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant. And thou shalt come into the ark, thou and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

God told Noah also to take an abundance of food of every kind into the ark, food for animals as well as for himself. And of every living thing in the world he was to take two. So into Noah's ark went two of every kind of bird and beast, fowl and cattle and insect, and the great ark was big enough to hold them all.

There was a word used a few moments ago that I want you to notice because it is a very interesting word. God made a covenant with Noah. Covenant means agreement. If Noah would do just what God told him to, God on His part promised to do all that should be needed for Noah so long as he lived and obeyed God's commands.

Into the ark they all went, Noah and his family and the long procession of the animals. And as soon as they were safe inside and the door was shut, it began to rain. It may not have rained very hard at first, but it rained and rained and rained without stopping, pouring down a perfect flood, with wild and furious gales rising ever louder, day after day, day after day, for forty days and forty nights. It

rained till the great fountains of the deep were broken up and all the windows of heaven were opened.

The waters so increased that the tops of the highest hills were covered. In the great floods and freshets, the cities that Cain had built were all swept away, the great homes of the giants went down like nine-pins before the blast, and all the men and women in the world were drowned, and every beast and bird perished. Only in the ark that rode safely on the top of the billows was there to be seen a sign of life. Inside the ark there were warmth and comfort and safety, for the Lord had shut Noah and his family within it. No harm could reach them there.

As the Bible says, Every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle and creeping things and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth, and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

Five weary months Noah spent in the ark before the storm lessened. One day God re-

membered Noah and sent a wind that passed over the earth, and the waters began to grow calm and to decrease. The rain diminished slowly, little by little the waters abated, but it took a very long time for them so to leave the earth that it could again be a habitation for man. In the seventh month from the time Noah entered the ark, it rested on dry ground, on the top of Mount Ararat. In the tenth month Noah opened the window of the ark and looked out over the waste of waters. Far and wide he could still see only the tossing, tumbling, foaming waves as of a mighty sea. But the tops of the mountains were now visible.

So out of the ark's window he sent forth a raven. The raven never came back. It wandered to and fro until the waves were dried up from the earth. Being a wild flesh-eating bird, it could find food for itself on the mountainside, and could perch there at night. The raven did not come back, as I said. So Noah sent forth a dove, a timid little bird of peace. But the dove could find no rest for the sole of her foot, and she came flying back, beating her

wings against the window until the good man put forth his hand and took her, and pulled her safe in. Seven days later he sent her forth again early in the morning, and at night she came back with an olive leaf in her mouth. This little green leaf told its own sweet story of cheer, and when Noah saw it, he knew that the waters were retreating and would soon be gone. Once more, at the end of seven days, he sent the dove, but this time she did not return.

She came back no more to the ark because everywhere the flowers were springing up and the grass was growing green. The dove would soon forget the long time in the ark when again she had a nest in some green olive tree.

Noah and his family lived in the ark until one day God said that they might leave it. They must have felt like storm tossed people who get safe to port after a long voyage. Noah opened the door in the side of the ark, and out flew all the birds, and out stepped all the animals, one by one, two by two. If Shem and Ham and Japheth had any little children, as no doubt they had, I am sure their faces

WITH OLIVE LEAF

were at the window watching the procession when the lions and tigers and wolves, not ferocious but gentle, went out into the great roomy world, while the cattle and the other beasts followed. The wild beasts were soon to grow fierce and prowl about for prey, but they were not fierce while they stayed in the ark, for they knew something strange was happening outside and they knew besides that Noah was their friend. They were glad enough to make lairs and seek dens, but the gentle household friends, the sheep and the goats, would stay near the ark until Noah and his people came out and showed them what to do.

Noah was a grand old ship builder and the ark he made was the forerunner of the fleets and navies of the world. He was a grand old sailor-man, not a bit afraid, though he had no mariner's compass and the stars were all hidden while the ark rode the waters. He trusted in God, and God brought him safe to the end of the voyage.

One day, up in the sky, out shone the sun, its dancing rays falling on all the rolling rivers

and singing brooks, and on the trees that once more lifted up their heads on the mountain-sides. Then up in the sky, spanning it with a mighty arch, softly shone the first rainbow.

You may break up the old ark, Noah, whenever you like, and take its timbers to build a house or make a fire. You may soon live again in a tent. You will not want the ark ever again. And a tent will seem a dearer home. For God has given you a promise and a pledge.

The first thing Noah did, when he and his family stood on the firm ground, was to build an altar of stones and offer on it a burnt offering to JEHOVAH. This was the way men worshipped then. Beside the altar he prayed and the smoke of his offering went floating up to the throne of God. And then Noah heard God say: I will not again curse the ground for man's sake, neither will I again smite everything living as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not fail.

It must have looked new and very beautiful to these people when they saw the trees

spreading their leaves like little green umbrellas and here and there a blossom peeping out. But they must have been lonely too with all the houses they used to see swept away, the neighbors and friends all gone, and the ark itself on an upland where they had never been before. They were like pioneers in a new country with everything to do. They were glad when they looked at the sky and saw the lovely rainbow. When you look up and see it, dear child, you too may remember what God said, for the rainbow is for you and me as well as for those who saw it first. Is there one after a shower? Then listen:

This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations.

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

And it shall come to pass when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every

living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature that is upon the earth.

Not only in the Bible, but in the traditions of people who have never had a Bible, there lingers the story of the Flood. Every nation has heard something of the great deluge that washed away the wickedness of the old, old world. But not every nation knows the meaning of the rainbow.

V

WHEN THEY BUILT A TOWER

DOES it ever seem odd to you that there are so many different languages? You may know a little of three yourself. Some children are so fortunate as to learn English and French and German about the same time, when they are little and can easily imitate the sounds they hear. It is very convenient to know more than one language and to read books that are written in another language than one's own. But, once upon a time, all the people in the world spoke the same tongue and understood each other without the least trouble wherever they happened to go. The whole earth, the Bible says, was once of one language and one speech.

A great many years had passed since the Flood, and the children had so multiplied that they had become great nations. They began to branch out from the East as they needed

more room for their tents and more pastures for their sheep and cattle, and, finally, some of them found a fertile plain in a land called Shinar. This plain pleased them so much that they determined to stay there and build a city. They began to make brick and mortar and they worked with great speed and pride, feeling very grand as they saw their city rising with its spires and tall chimneys and strong walls.

Go to, they said, this city is very fine, but let us build something finer. Let us build a tower, up, up, up, until its top shall touch the sky; let us make a tower that every one can see for miles and miles, so that all the people scattered abroad upon the face of the earth shall wonder at us and remember what we have done.

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded.

And the Lord said, Behold this people is one and they have all one language. And this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do.

Go to, let us go down and there confound their language that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth and they left off to build the city.

Therefore, is the name of it called Babel, because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth. And from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

I do not know whether these people who went on so famously with their tall tower meant to climb to its top and peep into the sky itself and see what was hidden on the other side of the sky. I have often thought I would like to see that myself and no doubt you have felt so too. But there was something in what they did that displeased God, and in those days the world's great children do not seem to have grown up to much wisdom. They were like little folk who build a great cathedral with roofs and steeples or a great tower of blocks that tumbles down at the touch. Their city and their tower had to stop

when the mason could not understand the carpenter and the laborer did not know what the foreman wanted him to do. They all seemed to be speaking different languages, so that they divided into little groups and companies; some went one way, some another, and only a few stayed beside the tall unfinished tower.

If it has any lesson for us it is that we must not be too proud and boastful about any work we do, but keep a humble spirit.

God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.

It was at the Tower of Babel that the different languages in the world were born.

VI

ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

IN a country called Chaldea there was a good old man whose name was Terah. We are now leaving behind us the simpler times and coming into the times when government began. The first government was that of the family and was called patriarchal. That is a hard name for a little tongue, but, dear child, I want you to say it over and I will try to tell you what it means. It means that a father governs a family and that all the relations, uncles and cousins and brothers and sisters and sons and daughters and servants, have to do whatever the father or patriarch says they must. A patriarch was a father, a king, and a general all in one.

Life was a little shorter now than in the early days. Terah in Ur of the Chaldeans was two hundred and five years old when he died. He had a son named Abram. Abram was a thoughtful man who liked to walk out at night

and look up at the stars and think of God and of God's Will.

So the Lord often looked at Abram and said things to him in the silence of the night. Once He said to him: Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee.

Abram heard God saying this in a voice within his soul.

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing.

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

The best part of what God said to Abram was: Thou shalt be a blessing. Abram gathered his family together, his beautiful wife whose name was Sarai, and Lot his nephew, and he started to go to a strange country. Abram was now seventy-five years old but was not feeble in the least. He was a rich man and he and Lot had a great deal of substance, flocks and herds of sheep, oxen, asses and camels. They had also men servants and

maid servants in great numbers. You may think of them riding on the camels, the great caravans moving slowly away from the land they knew to the land they did not know. The sacred writer says: They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.

It was a lovely land, overrun by warlike people, but God told Abram that in days to come it should belong to him. Wherever the caravan rested and they pitched their tents, Abram built an altar to the Lord and the Lord bent down to give him some token of His presence. Abram was the friend of God. As they went on they found that there was a famine in the land of Canaan and little food to be had there for a stranger with a great retinue. So Abram went to Egypt where food was plenty. The King of Egypt was kind and they tarried in his country awhile.

But Egypt was not his resting place. When they felt it was safe Abram and Lot gathered their people together and went up out of Egypt. The women and servants and children of the camp went too. Abram's fair wife

was queen of all. Abram was very rich in cattle and silver and gold. Lot too had flocks and herds and tents.

Abram and Lot, being kinsmen, were contented to live in the same place, but there was strife between their servants. The herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle were often disputing and fighting about the best pastures and the best streams, and their masters saw that this state of things must be stopped very soon or fierce foes, the Canaanite and the Perrizite, would take advantage, swoop down and destroy them. Abram was very noble and generous. He said to Lot: Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen. For we are brethren.

Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. If thou wilt take the left hand, I will go to the right. If thou depart to the right hand, I will go to the left.

It was settled in this way. Lot chose a beautiful well watered plain toward the east and there he pitched his tent.

After Lot had gone away, the Lord said to Abram:

Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art northward and southward and eastward and westward. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it and the breadth of it, for I will give it unto you.

Lot seems to have been a selfish person who made haste to snatch the best he could find. He had no sooner left Abram, however, than he found himself in a good deal of trouble. A battle began to rage around him, in which fierce chieftains fought, and those who won the day carried off Lot and his goods and his family into captivity. It really served him right.

One of Lot's people made his escape and slipped away to Abram, who was then dwelling in the Plain of Mamre. No sooner did Abram hear the tidings than he armed three hundred and eighteen trained servants, born in his own house, and the band came hot foot after the kings who had taken captive his nephew Lot.

This desert Sheik was every inch a soldier.

He came on the hostile camp in the dead of night, pounced upon it like a whirlwind, routed and smote it and brought back all the stolen goods; brought back Lot and his people, too, left them safe in their own land, and with the victorious troop went home again.

As he returned a conqueror, a number of the captains and kings of the valleys and hills came out to meet him, offering salutations. A mysterious personage, one Melchizedek, King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine. He was the Priest of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.

The King of Sodom came bowing out and said: Give me the captives you have taken but keep the spoil for yourself.

But Abram said: I have lifted up mine hand unto the Most High God that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet anything that is thine lest thou shouldst say I have made Abram rich.

After these things the Word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision saying: Fear not, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.

Although Abram was so rich and great, up to this time he had no heir. He thought of adopting a faithful servant who had been born in his house and making him his heir. But the Lord said to him, Thou shalt have a son of thine own and in the days to come the children who shall call thee father, through many generations, shall be more in number than the stars.

It was hard for Abram to believe this. God often told people secret things in those early days, speaking to them in visions and dreams. Everything He told Abram was fulfilled although he was almost a century old before his son Isaac was born.

VII

THE CHILD OF THE COVENANT

ONE day, as Abram sat at his tent door in the heat of the day, he looked up and saw three men crossing the plain and coming toward him. They were strangers, but he ran to meet them and bowed himself to the ground. He was very glad that visitors were coming although he did not know them. In that land there were no inns, and a patriarch like Abram kept open house in his great encampment of tents. It was polite to treat strangers well and it showed a kind heart. Abram was an Eastern prince. He wore flowing robes of many colors, with a girdle around his waist and sandals on his feet. The robes had rich embroidery at the hem. Sometimes they were white. He wore on his head a turban under which I can see his dark eyes, keen and piercing, eyes that could see far across the desert waste, eyes that were used to command.

This desert prince was almost a hundred years old, yet he was not bent or weak or infirm, but was a strong man still.

Bowing almost to the ground, as I said, in a lowly salaam, he begged the men to come in, addressing the one who seemed to be the leader. He said, My lord, if I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away I pray thee, but come in. Let water be fetched to wash your feet and rest yourselves under the trees and I will bring bread that you may comfort your hearts. So he made them sit down.

Then very quickly, as the way of the time was, he hastened into the tent and said to his wife: Make ready as fast as you can some cakes and bake them on the hearth. We have guests who must be well entertained.

In a very little while food was set before these visitors. We must not now call Abram by this name, as God gave him a better name, Abraham, the father of many nations. He did not know that these men were messengers from God. But they were indeed angels whom God had sent on an errand of His own.

They told him that Sarah his wife should,

before long, in her old age, have a son of her own. She could hardly believe it, but in due time the little one came and there were feasts and great rejoicing. Isaac, the long-hoped-for babe, was most beautiful and was, by and by, a gentle child who went everywhere with his father, and in whom Sarah took such pride as a mother would who had long ago given up the hope of ever having a little one. Sarah, my princess, was now the name of her who had once been Sarai.

Before Isaac came to make Abraham and Sarah supremely happy, there had been in the tent another dark eyed and graceful boy, the son of Hagar, Sarah's maid. This lad, whose name was Ishmael, had been very much loved by Abraham and he had at one time thought that he might bequeath to him all that he had. He said to the Lord: O that Ishmael might live before Thee.

But God said: No, not Ishmael.

Hagar was an Egyptian, a daughter of the desert and a slave in Abraham's house. After the birth of Isaac very little attention was paid to Ishmael and Sarah especially treated the

poor boy with the greatest disdain. She felt as if danger were brewing for her child whenever she looked at Hagar or let her eyes rest on Hagar's boy. Any little thing that Ishmael did, even in fun, made her angry. When Isaac was three years old and Ishmael perhaps thirteen, Sarah saw Ishmael mocking her boy. This was too much for her patience, and in great anger she said to Abraham: Cast out this bondwoman and her son. I will not have them here in the house with Isaac. I cannot bear the sight of him or his mother.

Abraham grieved greatly and did not want to do this. It seemed to him most cruel and unjust. But God said: In all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken to her voice, for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

But God promised, too, to make a great nation of the son of the bondwoman.

Early the next morning Abraham rose with a very heavy heart. He took bread, and filled a leather bottle with water, and giving both to Hagar sent her away. She carried the burden on her shoulder, and led her child by the hand and she walked a long way into the wilderness

of Beersheba. The desert was parched and hot, the sun beat upon their heads, the child grew faint.

When the water was spent in the bottle she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went and sat down a good way off, as it were a bow shot.

For she said: Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him and wept.

And God heard the voice of the lad and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said unto her: What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Arise, lift up the lad and hold him in thine hand, for I will make him a great nation.

And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water and she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the lad a drink.

And God was with the lad and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness and became an archer.

He was a wild man of the desert of whom it was said, His hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. A

different nature was his from that of the gentle Isaac.

A very strange incident happened some years later in the history of Abraham and Isaac. God said to the father: Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering in one of the mountains of which I will tell thee.

Very early the next morning Abraham rose, took his son and two of his servants, and carrying wood for a burnt offering started on his journey.

Three days they traveled, resting in the noontides, before Abraham saw the place afar off.

And Abraham said to the servants: Abide here with the ass and I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again to you.

He took the wood, gave it to Isaac to carry, took the fire in his hand and a knife, and they went on alone together.

And Isaac said unto Abraham, My father, and he said, Here am I, my son.

And Isaac said: Behold the fire and the

wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

And Abraham said: My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.

So they went on together.

When they came to the place, Abraham built the altar and laid the wood in order and then, with a breaking heart, he took Isaac and bound him and laid him on the altar.

No doubt his tears fell on Isaac's face and Isaac wept too, but did not resist. He was gentle as a lamb that was led to the slaughter, and in a strange way seemed to comprehend that whatever God commanded was right. Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the sharp knife to slay his son. The knife gleamed in the air. Isaac lay still. I do not believe he was afraid. He trusted his father. Suddenly, from heaven, the angel of the Lord called loudly: Abraham, Abraham, stop. Lay not thine hand upon the lad. Do nothing to him. I know that thou fearest God.

Joyfully Abraham dropped the knife, looked up and saw in a thicket a great ram, held fast by his horns. He took the ram and offered

him for a burnt offering instead of his son. And he called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh, which means, the Lord will provide.

The Lord then blessed Abraham from heaven a second time and renewed His promises and the two, with the young men, went home to Sarah with light hearts.

Not long after this, as years were counted then, a great trial came to Abraham and Isaac. Sarah, the dear wife and mother, died. Abraham wanted a place in which to bury his dead. He went to some of the people who lived near him and said: I am a stranger and a sojourner with you. Give me a place here to bury my dead.

But he did not mean to take the land as a gift. The old man bowed himself to the ground before the sons of Heth and said: I prefer to pay you money for a burying place. This is a field with a cave that I want. Let me have it that I may bury my dead. You must not refuse me this favor, but I must buy the land.

Ephron, the owner of the land, said: My lord, the land is worth four hundred shekels

of silver. What is that betwixt me and thee? Bury therefore thy dead.

So Abraham gave Ephron the silver by weight, measuring it into scales current money with the merchant. And after this, when the sale had been ratified in the presence of many witnesses, he laid to rest Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre.

The first record of selling real estate for money is given here in Genesis, and the first land that was bought was bought by one who mourned, that it might be a grave for one he loved.

VIII

THE STORY OF ISAAC AND REBEKAH

AFTER the death of Sarah it was very lonely in the tent. Abraham had grown old. He was beginning to live in the past. He missed his wife, and, as to Isaac, life seemed utterly forlorn without his mother. It was quite time that Isaac should have a wife, but among the daughters of the Canaanites there were none that suited Abraham. He was more concerned about it than Isaac was; he wanted his only son to have a wife from among his own people in the distant land from which he had come. There were high born damsels there. He sent a trusted servant on this important errand. This Eliezar of Damascus was to go and choose a wife whom Isaac and Abraham would both approve. He could not bring her against her will, so it was really a mission that needed a very wise and delicate management. Eliezar was devoted to the family and very willing to do his best. He set out with no less than ten camels, loaded

with costly gifts for the bride, and across the land he went day by day until he reached Mesopotamia. This was the point he sought and he made his camels kneel down beside a well, outside the city, just at the twilight hour when women came to the well to draw water. In Eastern lands the village women still come out at sunset with their pitchers and buckets to draw water for household use, and they stand around the well and talk and tell about the little things that have taken place through the day.

The servant knew this custom and he lifted up his heart and prayed:

O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me goodspeed this day and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold I stand here by the well and the daughters of the city come out to draw water.

Let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say: Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink, and she shall say: Drink and I will give thy camels drink also, let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac, and therefore shall I

know that thou hast shown kindness unto my master.

Eliezar knew that a gracious lady would be polite and kind, she could be nothing else, and this was his test of her goodness. Almost before he had ended praying, a lovely girl with soft dark eyes and raven tresses came walking to the well with her pitcher on her shoulder. She was very fair to look upon, a young slim girl with a light step and a firm hand and a poise of the head like a royal maiden. The man did not yet know it but she was a daughter of Abraham's own house and a cousin of Isaac. Eliezar ran to meet her and said, Give me, I pray thee, a drink of cool water from your well. I am tired and I have come a long way.

To be sure I will, she said, hastening to let down her pitcher. Drink, my lord, and I will draw water for thy camels too.

In a thirsty land, where the deserts are wide and the sun is hot, nothing is so grateful as a drink of cool water. Here was a girl who knew what to do and did it without delay, and whose sweet courtesy filled with delight the

man who watched her. It is a pretty story. When she had finished drawing water for the camels, which was no light task, the stranger took from a packet a massive golden earring and two splendid golden bracelets.

And he said: Whose daughter art thou? Tell me, I pray thee, is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge? And she said: I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah. She said: We have both straw and provender enough and room to lodge in.

And the man bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord. He said: Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth. I, being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.

Pleased with the beautiful presents, the young girl sped swiftly home and told her mother and her people about the meeting at the well. Her name was Rebekah. She had a brother, Laban, and Laban ran out to meet the strange visitor. He had seen the earring and the bracelets and he had heard what Rebekah had said, so he gave a warm welcome

to Abraham's messenger. With hands outspread and bowing low, he said: Come in, thou blessed of the Lord. Wherefore standest thou without? For I have prepared the house and room for thy camels.

The man went into the house and Laban ungirded his camels and gave them straw and provender, and servants brought water to wash the tired feet of the men after the dusty journey.

Then food was set before them, but the grave and stately envoy said: I will not eat until I have told my errand.

And Laban said: Speak on.

This was all according to custom among well bred people.

He answered: I am Abraham's servant, and the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he hath given him flocks and herds and silver and gold and men servants and maid servants and camels and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old and unto him hath he given all that he hath. And my master made me swear saying: Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of

the daughters of the Canaanites in whose land I dwell. But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

And I said unto my master: Peradventure the woman will not follow me? And he said unto me: The Lord before whom I walk will send his angel with thee and prosper thy way. And thou shalt take a wife for my son from my kindred, and of my father's house.

After this he went on to tell all about the pretty scene at the well and the test he had resolved to try; and then he said that he wished to go back at once to those who had sent him, and to take Rebekah with him.

In our country this would be very strange, but it did not seem at all strange to these people in that land. It was according to ancient custom, and marriages were always arranged in some such way.

Laban and his father Bethuel answered: The thing proceedeth from the Lord. Behold Rebekah is before thee. Take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken.

Then the servant brought forth a great store of glittering jewels, gold and silver and precious stones and rich garments, and gave them to Rebekah. They were presents for the bride. He gave rich presents to all her family and the family made a great feast. Early the next morning he said: You must let me go now. I must hasten back to my master. But Rebekah's mother could not bear to part with her daughter so soon, and she said, as Laban did too: Do not go yet. Stay awhile. Let Rebekah wait a few days, at least ten, and after that she shall go.

But no persuasion would avail with the man, who felt that he must fulfill his mission and carry home the bride. He said, positively: Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way. Send me away that I may go unto my master.

They asked Rebekah herself if she were willing to go and she said: I will go.

So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse and Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said unto her, Thou art our sister. Be thou the

mother of thousands of millions and let thy children possess the gate of those who hate them.

I think it was very brave in this young girl to go so willingly into a strange country with her nurse, and perhaps with a little train of maids of her own. Something must have told her that she was going to one who would love her and that she would have a happy life. The camels, those great creatures that are like ships in the desert, carried them along until they had left their own country behind them and were in a land strange to them, the land of Abraham and Isaac. Rebekah never went home to Laban and her mother again.

Now Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide. And he looked up and saw coming nearer and nearer the long line of the camels. And, as he looked, Rebekah too raised her eyes and saw Isaac, and as she did so she alighted from the camel. She had said: What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the answer had been: It is my master.

Do not think she went to meet him holding

her head up, as she had done by the well; not so. She took a veil white and full that draped her in a mantle and covered herself from head to foot. And Isaac stepping onward in the dusk, met her and took her hand and led her into his mother's Sarah's tent, and she became his wife, and he loved her.

And at last he was comforted after his mother's death.

IX

REBEKAH'S CHILDREN

THE beautiful Rebekah had two sons, Esau and Jacob. When Esau grew up he was brave and bold and liked to go out and hunt with his bow and arrows, roving over the hills. Jacob did not care for rough sport. He was soft of speech and quiet, a gentle lad who loved to stay in the tent. Of the two, Esau was the dearer to Isaac his father while Rebekah made an idol of Jacob. Isaac's pride was in Esau, the bold hunter, and he did not much notice Jacob.

One day Esau came home from the field very weary and faint with hunger. He had tramped all day in the wild woods pursuing his game, with nothing to eat. Jacob had been making a savory pottage with red lentils or beans, and as Esau came to the tent the fumes of the delicious stew tempted his appetite. He begged Jacob to give him some food for he

was very faint. You would think Jacob could not have hurried fast enough to feed his famished brother.

Not at all. Esau had something that Jacob coveted, that he had often dreamed of and wished for. Esau, as elder brother, was the heir and held the birthright, and Jacob said softly: I am sorry you are hungry but I cannot give you my supper for nothing. If you will sell me the birthright I will give you all the red pottage you want.

It was a mean sort of bargain for a brother to make. But Esau, who was one of the people who cannot deny themselves anything they very much want, said in effect: O take the old birthright! What do I care for it? I am nearly dead with hunger, anyway. Make haste and give me food, and you can have it for all me.

Jacob said: Will you swear to give it to me?

And Esau took the oath that Jacob required and sold the birthright for a mess of pottage, for bread and lentils; and Esau ate and drank and went his way.

Thus Esau despised his birthright.

A great deal of trouble followed this transaction. Isaac was by this time very old and almost blind. I have not the least doubt that Rebekah had been mixed up with the birthright business, for a little while afterward she helped Jacob play a very low trick upon his poor old father. It was a trick that only a woman would have thought of and carried through so cruelly. I will tell you about it.

Isaac was fond of the venison that Esau brought him and one day he said he could eat if he only had that. A word to Esau was enough. Away he went with his quiver and his bow in search of the meat the old man liked. But this did not please Rebekah, who wanted Jacob, for reasons of her own, to be pleasing to his father, more pleasing than Esau.

Come my son, she said; you must take the place of Esau for once. I will help you.

So she deftly covered his neck and hands with goat skin, so that the rough hair would deceive his father and make him think it was Esau who came into his presence. Then she

prepared a delicious dish that resembled venison and sent it to Isaac by the hands of Jacob.

My father, he called, My father, and Isaac, sitting alone in the dusk of his blindness, said:

Here am I. Who art thou, my son?

And Jacob said to his father: I am Esau thy firstborn. I have done according as thou badest me. Arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison that thy soul may bless me.

Isaac suspected something. It did not seem possible that the hunter could so soon have brought down the prey and he asked how it was that it had been found so quickly. And Jacob dared to answer: Because the Lord thy God brought it to me.

Still feeling that something was wrong, Isaac said: Come closer to me and let me feel whether this is indeed my son Esau.

And Jacob went close to Isaac and the blind man could not see him, but the old hands groped until they felt the hair of goats which Rebekah had put on Jacob's hand and neck.

He said: The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

Once again he said: Tell me the truth. Art thou Esau? And he said: I am.

Then having eaten the flesh of kids which Rebekah had dressed so that it tasted like venison, he spread out his hands, kissed his son and gave him his blessing. He said solemnly: God give thee the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee and nations bow down to thee. Be lord over thy brethren and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee. Cursed be every one that curseth thee and blessed be he that blesseth thee.

Jacob had no sooner gone away from the presence of his father and put on his own garments again, than Esau came home from his hunting. Esau hurried and made savory meat and brought it in to Isaac.

And Isaac his father said unto him: Who art thou? And he said: I am thy son, thy firstborn, Esau.

Then Isaac trembled exceedingly and said: What is this, where is he that hath taken ven-

ison and brought it me? I have eaten of all before thou camest and have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed.

When Esau heard these words he cried out with a great and very bitter cry, and said unto his father: Bless me, even me also, O my father.

And he said: Thy brother came deceitfully and hath stolen away thy blessing.

Esau was very angry, as he had a right to be. Jacob's name meant supplanter, and he had twice supplanted his brother. He had coaxed away his birthright and now he had stolen his blessing.

No one can help feeling sorry for this son of Isaac, who, strong man as he was, lifted up his voice and wept, and said: Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me, O my father.

Isaac was puzzled. He had made Esau, by means of his words, to be a sort of serf to Jacob; he had given Jacob rule and authority and the best of everything. But he said, moved by Esau's bitter cries: Behold thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and

of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live and shalt serve thy brother. And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

Esau went out from his father full of grief and wrath. He made up his mind to bide his time. He knew his father could not live very long. He said: The days of mourning for my father are at hand. Then will I kill my brother Jacob.

Rebekah heard this threat and was very much frightened. She knew that Jacob could not safely stay at home, so she sent him far away to her father's house. It was many years before he came back and he never again saw his mother.

Rebekah said privately to Isaac: I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth.

Esau had married two wives, both of whom Isaac and Rebekah disliked. As the custom was they all lived in one home.

She said: If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, what good shall my life be to me?

So Isaac sent Jacob to the home of Bethuel, his grandfather, and told him to find a wife there among his mother's people.

Long years of sorrow and suffering were to be the portion of Jacob. He had the birthright and the blessing and, after awhile, he had many joys; but great trials came to him, because he had acted so meanly to his brother.

X

THE LADDER TO THE SKY

JACOB had deserved to have troubles, but, though he had done very wrong and been unkind and selfish, he was not wholly bad and God did not cast him off. We can see that notwithstanding his faults God loved him and this is a great comfort to us. Though Jacob took the wrong means to procure them, the very fact that he longed for the birthright and the blessing which Esau cared so little about showed that he had the right idea of their value. He was compelled to fly for his life from the vengeance of his brother and, when he turned away from his mother and his home, his heart was very sad.

Though the son of a rich man, he went away on foot without any attendants. He stole away lest Esau should pursue him in a fury. But he went on the road that Isaac his father told him to take and his face was set toward

the far off home of his mother's kindred. Isaac said: We cannot let you marry anybody here in Canaan and it is time that you should marry. These daughters of Heth whom Esau has married are breaking your mother's heart. Go then to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and seek a wife in the house of her brother Laban. And may God bless you and keep you all your days. May you have the blessing of Abraham and may God make you the father of a great people.

Thus Isaac bade Jacob farewell. His mother cried when she kissed him at the last and, for days after he had gone, there were tears in her eyes as she stood in the tent door and looked over the desert.

Jacob went out from Beersheba with his little stock of food for the road, dried meat and bread and fruit, trusting to find water in springs and wells by the way. He guided his steps by the sun and stars as he went toward the distant land of Haran.

Night came on and, worn and weary, the young wayfarer found a place in a field beside the highway where he thought he would tarry

until the morning. Perhaps he could hear through the silence the cry of the jackal, or the padding feet of wild beasts prowling about in the dark. I am sure that he knelt down on the green grass and prayed that God would take care of him and preserve him from harm. He gathered some loose stones that were lying about on the edge of the road and took them for his pillow and lay down and fell asleep. Hard was the stony pillow, but the tired eyes soon closed and the traveler forgot his misery and slept as if he had been at home. In that sleep, dear children, Jacob had the loveliest dream ever given to mortal man.

He dreamed that he saw a ladder which reached from earth to heaven; the ladder's foot was on the ground, but the top was lost beyond the sky; and behold! the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. At the very top of it, where it touched heaven, amid the brightness of the sky stood the Lord Himself, looking down in pity and love on the lonely boy below. To the sleeper lying on the dewy pasture, his head pillowed on the cold stones, God revealed Himself in this

THE ANGEL DREAM

dream, saying: I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest to thee will I give it and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

And behold I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

When Jacob opened his eyes, morning had come suddenly as it does in the East, flooding the world with light. The wild beasts had hidden away in jungles, thickets and caves, the birds were singing, the dewdrops shone on the blades of grass, and the dark night was over. Morning had come. A beautiful new day was born.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and said: Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said: How awful is this place. This is none other

than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.

The first thing that Jacob did in the early morning was to choose a stone from those on which his head had rested, and set it up for a pillar. He poured some oil on top of this stone, for it was sacred in his sight.

In those days when God had given anyone a great deliverance or a great victory he did what Jacob did here. He set up a monument of some kind that it might always remind himself of the Lord's goodness; and that all who passed by might see it, and think of God.

Jacob called the name of that place Bethel, which means God's house.

And Jacob vowed a vow saying: If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house. And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give a tenth unto thee.

THE LADDER TO THE SKY

Dear children who read this old story, I have this word for you: Often as we go through life we are surrounded by dangers, seen and unseen, and many a time, though we do not know it, God's angels are all about us keeping watch, both when we wake and when we sleep. There is always a shadowy ladder, golden bright, stretching from our earthly home to heaven, and up and down that ladder the angels walk.

XI

JACOB AND LABAN

AFTER Jacob had built his altar and set up his pillar of stone at Bethel, where he had seen the angels going to and fro between earth and heaven, he went more cheerily on his way to the strange country. Hope had been kindled in his heart, and when one is hopeful one's courage is strong. At night he slept peacefully. By day he walked steadily on until one morning, looking up, he found himself in a green rolling country, a land of pastures and fleecy flocks. He saw a great field and in the field a well and beside the well three flocks of lambs and sheep. The sheep were lying by the well, huddling together closely as sheep do, as they waited to be watered. The well was a deep cool cistern of clear water and it was the most precious thing its owner had, for there the thirsty sheep came every day to drink. If the well had gone dry the shepherds would have had to drive

their flocks far away to find some spring or river or some unfailing well. Here and there among the sheep stood shepherds, shaggy figures with long beards and loose flowing garments fastened with girdles around their waists. They were dressed just as Jacob was, and in their hands were shepherds' crooks with which to guide their flocks. Jacob was a shepherd too and knew all about flocks. His heart leaped with joy and he almost forgot his homesickness at this familiar sight, for he had been yearning to see once more the flocks he had left in Gerar.

In the East the shepherd knows each sheep by name and, though sheep are silly creatures, they learn to love those who care for them and, out of flocks of hundreds, the mother ewes and the young lambs learn to obey the shepherd's voice and will come to him one by one.

The well was covered by a great slab of rock. When this was lifted, the sheep were watered. Then it was replaced until another time.

As Jacob came near he greeted the shep-

herds politely. My brethren, he said, whence come ye?

From Haran we come, they answered.

From Haran! Jacob was glad indeed, for it was Haran to which he was going.

Do you happen to know Laban the son of Nahor? he inquired.

We know Laban, they said, and here behold Rachel his daughter is coming with her sheep.

Across the field came Rachel, slender and straight and very beautiful.

For what are you waiting? asked the stranger. It is time, is it not, that the sheep should be watered and the cattle gathered together and all of them fed? To Jacob the men seemed to be needlessly loitering.

By this time Rachel had reached the well, and now Jacob ran and lifted off the heavy stone and himself drew water for Rachel's flock.

He may have seen in her sweet face some look that reminded him of his mother, for he loved her at first sight. He told her that he was her near kinsman, Rebekah's son, and

then with a kinsman's privilege he kissed her and lifted up his voice and wept.

Quickly the good news spread. It ran like lightning from one to another and even before Rachel hurried home to tell her father, Laban had some inkling of what had happened. Laban welcomed Jacob joyfully, embraced him, kissed him and brought him into his home.

Jacob soon took charge of Laban's great flocks and herds, and when Laban wanted to pay him he said, Do not offer me money. I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

It is better, said Laban, that I give her to thee than to another man. Abide with me.

Seven years passed, Jacob toiled in sun and drought, in frost and cold, by night and by day, but he did not mind hard work. The seven years seemed to him but a few days, so dearly did he love Rachel.

Do you remember how Jacob deceived and cheated his old father, Isaac, securing the birthright and the blessing by a trick? Well, he was to be cheated and deceived himself

many a time in the days to come by those of his own family. I am sure he would remember his sin and feel that his punishment was just when again and again he was deceived.

At the end of seven years there was a wedding feast and Jacob was married as he thought to the maiden he worshipped. He had toiled for her seven years and they had seemed to him but a few days on account of the love he bore her. According to Eastern custom, the bride was brought to her husband completely hidden by a great opaque veil and he could not so much as have a single peep at her face till they were married.

Lo and behold, when the ceremony was over and the feast finished and the guests gone away, Jacob discovered that his bride was not Rachel, but her elder sister Leah, at whom he had never glanced twice in his life. Leah was as plain as Rachel was fair and her face was disfigured by weak eyes which grew red with crying when she now saw Jacob look at her with anger and disdain.

I may as well tell you that in those old times a man often had several wives. But Abraham

and Isaac had been contented with one wife, and Jacob had meant to follow their example. He wished Rachel for his bride, Rachel and not Leah.

What is this that you have done? he said to Laban in great displeasure. This is not my Rachel. Why have you palmed off Leah on me and beguiled me in this mean and treacherous way?

Smoothly Laban answered him, smoothly and without excitement, as if to say, What a fuss you are making about nothing!

It is not customary in our country to let a younger sister marry first. If you still want Rachel, serve me for her seven years more and you shall have her too. I have given you the elder daughter, but you shall have her sister if you agree to my bargain.

So Jacob served another seven years. Then he had two wives, Leah and Rachel, but he loved Rachel with his whole heart and he never cared very much about Leah.

In due time, when Jacob had children and had also become a rich man with flocks and herds of his own, he felt the old home-longing

tugging at his heart and decided to return to the place from which he had come, to go back to the land of Canaan.

So he assembled his household and they started on their way. Knowing that Laban would try to hinder his going, he stole away, and his caravan had gone some distance before Laban found out his departure.

Jacob had three days' start before his father-in-law found out that he was gone. Instantly he set forth in pursuit, for he did not wish Jacob to leave him nor was he willing to lose the advantage of Jacob's knowledge and his faithful toil. Besides, both Laban and his sons were jealous of Jacob's increasing wealth.

They went forth in a mood of fierce anger, but God warned Laban in a dream to let Jacob alone. Speak not to him either good or bad, said the Lord in this dream.

Rachel had stolen from her father some images that he prized, images that were his household gods, for he was in part an idolater. She had secreted them in her clothing but Jacob did not suspect it.

At Gilead, Laban saw the encampment of

Jacob. So he pitched his tents a little way off.

And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done that thou hast stolen away from me, and carried away my two daughters, as captives taken with the sword?

Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly and steal away from me, and didst not tell me that I might have sent thee away with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp?

Thou hast not suffered me to kiss my daughters, nor the little ones. Thou hast behaved unkindly and with folly.

It is in the power of my hand to do thee hurt; but the God of my father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

And now, though thou art weary to be gone, because thou wouldst see again thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?

And Jacob answered and said to Laban, I stole away because I was afraid; for I said, Peradventure thou wouldst take by force thy

daughters from me. But he went on to say, I know nothing about thy gods. If any one in my company has stolen them, let him be put to death. Search until the gods are found. Jacob had no thought that Rachel had them with her in the tent. She sat comfortably on her cushions with the idols underneath her and of course the images were quite safe. Laban could not find them. He stormed around and gave everybody trouble, but at last he gave up the search.

Naturally Jacob resented this behavior of Laban's and he said, chidingly, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?

Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren that they may judge between us both.

This twenty years have I been with thee; the flocks of sheep and goats have been in my care and nothing has perished.

That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bore the loss of it; of my hand

didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

I have been twenty full years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac had been with me, surely thou hadst now sent me away empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked thee yesternight.

Then Laban answered and said to Jacob: These daughters are my daughters and these children are my children and these cattle are my cattle and all that thou hast is mine; and what can I do this day unto these my daughters or unto their children?

Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

And Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar.

And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones and made a heap; and they did eat there upon the heap.

Having broken bread together they were once more friends and Laban turned toward his home while Jacob proceeded on his journey.

XII

JACOB MEETS ESAU

TWENTY years have gone over the heads of Jacob and Esau since last they met. The feud that raged between them when they parted had never been peacefully settled. So far as Jacob knew, his brother Esau still nursed his wrath and meant to kill him when he should appear in Canaan. Knowing and fearing this, Jacob yet went back, for was not his birthright in the land of Canaan and did he not hear the voice of God bidding him seek the land of Abraham and Isaac?

There were two natures struggling in Jacob. One was a lofty nature that was looking up to heaven and out of self. The other was a craven nature that was cowardly and sordid and was always trying to grasp whatever it could for selfish ends. You and I need not look down on Jacob, for in us there are often two natures and they struggle for the victory as they did in Jacob. We sometimes say that

the good angel is uppermost in a child to-day or that the bad angel has taken hold of him. All our lives this fight between good and bad will be going on. We need forever to ask God to help us so that the good shall triumph.

Jacob understood this. We find that he often spent hours in prayer to God for help. Nightly he prayed under the stars when the camp was fast asleep and sometimes God's angels met and comforted him.

Thinking of Esau, Jacob decided to conciliate him by sending him a kind message. Esau was now a desert Sheik living in the fastnesses of the rocks in Seir, in the country of Edom. He had an armed host with him and the mountain passes were his property. Jacob could not hope to escape Esau's watch.

If you are like me, dear child, you love to read about the brave and hardy soldiers who hide in the heather or lie close and still behind dark rocks that they may defend their hillside homes. In Sir Walter Scott's Lady of the Lake, when Fitz-James and Roderick Dhu met on Clan Alpine's ground one night, Lowland and Highland pitted against one another,

Fitz-James expressed a wish that he might some time meet Roderick and his band.

"Have thou thy wish!" cried the Highlander, and gave a shrill whistle which was quickly answered.

Says Sir Walter Scott:

Instant through copse and heath arose
Bonnets and spears and bended bows,
On right, on left, above, below,
Sprang up at once the lurking foe.
From shingles gray their lances start:
The bracken bush sends forth the dart,
The rushes and the willow wand
Are bristling into axe and brand.
And every tuft of brown gives life
To plaided warrior armed for strife.

And Kipling in his ballad of East and West, which every boy should know, has a word picture very much like that of Scott, except that his is a picture of a border chieftain in India. Says Kamal to his gallant foe:

There was not a rock for twenty mile, there
was not a clump of tree
But covered a man of my own men with his
rifle cocked on his knee.

Esau was of the same type; a Bedouin of the wild desert, and Jacob knew that to pass through Esau's land was to risk all that he had. Still only by crossing Edom could he reach Canaan.

So Jacob's messengers went forward.

And he commanded them saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau: Thy servant Jacob saith thus: I have sojourned with Laban and stayed there until now;

And I have oxen and asses, flocks and men servants and women servants; and I have sent to tell my lord that I may find grace in thy sight.

And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau and also he cometh to meet thee and four hundred men with him.

The answer was enough to frighten Jacob; and frightened he was but he did not run away. That would have been useless. He divided his company into two bands so that if Esau pounced on one the other might escape, and then, having done the best he could, he prayed earnestly to God.

And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he shall come and smite me and the mother with the children.

And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude.

That night Jacob selected a magnificent present for Esau, a present worthy of a king, and sent it before him, making a space between drove and drove, so that Esau would be pleased and impressed. Two hundred she-goats, twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams. Then, awhile after, thirty camels with their colts, forty cows, ten bulls,

twenty she-asses and ten foals. Drove by drove they went.

And he commanded the leader of the first drove, saying, When Esau, my brother, meeteth thee and asketh thee, Who art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee?

Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau; and, behold, also he is behind us.

And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him.

And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.

So went the present over before him; and himself lodged that night in the company.

In the night Jacob took his wives and his children and softly and stealthily passed with them over the brook Jabbok, and there, leaving them, he knelt alone by the brook and

prayed until the break of day. He prayed in great agony of soul, and it seemed to him as if he fought with God for a blessing. God heard him and gave him a blessing, changing his old name of Jacob, a supplanter, to Israel; for as a prince, said the Lord, thou hast had power with God and with men and hast prevailed.

No wonder that Jacob called that hallowed spot by a name that was strangely sacred. He called it Peni-el, for he had seen God there, he said, face to face, and his life was preserved.

But after that wrestle Jacob was never altogether the same. So great had been the conflict that he was lame to the day of his death.

The morning broke and he met Esau.

And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau came and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah and unto Rachel and unto the two handmaids.

And he put the handmaids and their children foremost and Leah and her children after and Rachel and Joseph behind.

And he passed over before them and bowed

himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

And Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept.

And he lifted up his eyes and saw the women and the children and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.

Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves.

And Leah also with her children came near and bowed themselves; and after came Joseph near and Rachel and they bowed themselves.

And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord.

And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself.

And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wert pleased with me.

Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is

brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with thee and because I have enough. And he urged him and he took it.

And he said, Let us take our journey and let us go and I will go before thee.

And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender and the flocks and herds with young are with me; and if men should overdrive them one day all the flock will die.

Let my lord, I pray thee, pass before his servant; and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that go before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir.

And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me. And he said, What needeth it? let me find grace in the sight of my lord.

So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. He went back with his armed men.

Esau and Jacob were friends from that time, and when Isaac died, being very old and full of years, his sons buried him.

But for hundreds of years, long after both

these brothers were asleep with their fathers, the children of Esau annoyed the children of Israel and most of the troubles the latter had to bear started somewhere in the wilderness holds of Edom.

XIII

JOSEPH THE DREAMER

TWELVE sons called Jacob father and a goodly number of sturdy men they were. But only two of them called Rachel mother. Of these two, Joseph and Benjamin, the first was his father's great favorite and Jacob showed the lad so partial a love that it brought on him the enmity of his older brothers. Joseph was loved because he was Rachel's boy and because he was very lovable and charming, a youth of rare qualities. His father showed his pride in him openly and gave him a rich and elegant coat woven in many colors, something finer than he had ever given Reuben or Judah, Simeon or Naphtali, Levi or Dan. The others envied Joseph his fine coat and his place in his father's love and Joseph was not very prudent in his manner toward them. They were older than he and

were provoked and vexed at the things he said. Sometimes, too, he told his father about things they did and Jacob reproved them; and the sum of the whole matter was that the more Jacob loved Joseph the more his ten older brothers hated him. They could not speak peaceably to him.

The little brother Benjamin seems not to have aroused anybody's anger. Rachel, his mother, died when he was born, and she was buried in Bethlehem. She said when she was dying that the baby's name should be Benoni, son of my sorrow, but his father said, No, I will give him another name; and he was called Benjamin, son of my right hand. He was but an infant when some of his tall brothers were bearded men.

The ten kept their flocks and were often away from home for days together. Sometimes Joseph was with them. Oftener he stayed with his father and his little brother. He was a thoughtful lad and he had wonderful dreams. He told the dreams to the others and they hated him more than ever when they heard them.

And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to my sheaf.

And his brethren said unto him, Shalt thou reign indeed over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words.

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

And he told it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brothers indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

And his brothers envied him, but his father observed the saying.

It was some time after the incident of the dreams that Joseph, a lad of seventeen, was

sent by his father to visit his brethren who had gone a good distance off with their flocks and told to bring back tidings of them. The boy, bright, brave and manly, bowed low to his father and kissed him and the father watched him proudly until a turn of the road hid him from view.

Years were to pass, slow and sad and bitter years, before that father and that son should meet again.

For this was what happened.

The boy did not immediately find his brothers. They had gone far, their great flocks needing pasture or the wells being dry, and it was not till a stranger told him that they had gone to Dothan, much farther off than Shechem, that he came up with them.

Far off they saw him and their hearts were filled with the blackest envy and the most cruel hate. Long before he came near they put their heads together, conspiring wickedly to kill the boy.

Look, they said, look, it is Joseph, his father's darling. But Israel cannot help him now. Behold this dreamer of dreams.

Come, they said, let us kill him and throw his body into a pit, and then we will make Israel think that a wild beast caught him and devoured him.

No plot could have been more full of malice. Hard as stones were the hearts of these wicked men.

Reuben, the oldest brother, was not so hard as the rest. He did not want to kill the boy. He thought he would persuade them merely to cast him alive into a pit and leave him there. Then he meant to go back, save him, and take him home to his father. But Reuben's kind thought was never carried out.

The brothers fell on Joseph with the fury of wolves and bears and stripped him of his beautiful gay coat, taunting and jeering him with scornful words. Into a deep hole, the hole where had been a well now dry, they roughly threw him, a weary, hungry, heart broken boy and then they sat down to supper, laughing no doubt over their cruel deed. Reuben had no hand in what followed next. He did not sit down to eat bread with the others, for he felt, as the oldest, a responsibil-

ity for Joseph. Very likely he had sons of his own as old as this young brother whom the sons of Jacob were so bent on killing. They at that time meant to leave him there to perish. Not one of them shared Reuben's kinder intention.

Here is the next step in the story.

As they were eating they looked up and saw a company of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead with camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

Egypt at this time was a very rich country where the people, not being shepherds, bought and sold goods and where there was a great deal of trading going on. Slaves too were bought in the markets of Egypt. Judah thought why not sell our brother, instead of leaving him to die? After all, he said, he is our brother. There is no profit in killing him. Let us sell him to these merchantmen. We shall make money by the transaction and there will be an end forever of Joseph and his dreams.

The rest, Reuben being absent, easily agreed to this; the Ishmaelites speedily drew

the lad out of the pit and willingly paid the brothers twenty pieces of silver for him. Away they went to Egypt and the wicked brothers divided the money and were contented. They had not even pity for poor Joseph, carried off into slavery.

But Reuben came back and was dreadfully distressed when he heard the tale. He rent his clothes and lamented with tears. Still he did not feel enough real sorrow to tell his father the truth when they all went home without Joseph. He said, The child is not, and I, whither shall I go?

Poor Reuben! His fault was that he was very weak of will though he had a kinder heart than the rest. This is what they did.

They took Joseph's coat and killed a kid and dipped the coat in the blood.

And they brought the coat of many colors to their father and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

And he knew it and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sack-

cloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

But the Midianites sold Joseph into Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's and Captain of the Guard.

XIV

JOSEPH IN PRISON

YOU would never expect that a poor unknown lad from a far off country sold as a slave in the market would fall under the notice of the greatest king in the world, but that is the very thing that happened. Had Joseph been bought by Pharaoh, he might never have been more than a servant in the palace kitchen, and Potiphar, a bluff soldier, Captain of the king's Guard, probably bought him only because he was pleased with his modest looks and thought he could be of use.

But, my child, though Joseph was sold into Egypt, he was not sold away from the Lord. The Lord was with him. The Lord made everything he did to prosper. The Lord gave him success. Before very long this Hebrew boy, who had brains and prudence, in whom was the brave spirit of Abraham and the gentle heart of Isaac, and the shrewd wit of Jacob,

was at the head of Potiphar's household. He was a slave, it is true, but he was trusted, and had charge of the accounts, the buying, the selling, and the management of all Potiphar's affairs.

But for the fact that he offended Potiphar's wife, who told lies about him to her husband, he might always have remained with the bluff Captain of the Guard. But Potiphar's wife with her lying speech so wrought on Potiphar that his wrath was kindled and he threw him bound into the king's prison, a perfectly dreadful place whence very few prisoners ever came out alive.

But the Lord went with him to the prison. The Lord was leading Joseph by a pathway of his own. He did not mean him to stay in the prison but he wanted him to be there long enough to forget any pride he had hitherto had and to think once more about the God of his fathers.

The keeper of the prison liked Joseph and gave him as many privileges as he could. The other prisoners liked him, for he was ready to serve them. Among the prisoners were two

from Pharaoh's household, his chief butler and his chief baker.

Probably both had been suspected and accused of trying to poison the king, for the monarchs of the East were always afraid that there might be death in the wine they drank and the dishes they ate. The chief baker was the man who presided over the palace kitchen. The chief butler took charge of the wines that Pharaoh drank at feasts and offered him the cup. Both these men had people around who spied upon them and were anxious to ruin them if they could. When Pharaoh was angry with them neither of them had much reason to expect that they would see the palace or the sunlight any more.

Those were the days of dreams, and if anyone had a remarkable dream he tried very hard to find out what message it had brought him. One night a dream visited each of them.

And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked on them and, behold, they were sad.

And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were

with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?

And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me.

And in the vine were three branches; and it was as though it budded and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes.

And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

And Joseph said to him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days.

Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head and restore thee unto thy place; and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

But think on me when it shall be well with thee and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh and bring me out of this house;

For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head;

And in the uppermost basket there was all manner of baked meats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.

And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days.

Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast

unto all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

And he restored the chief butler again, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

But he hanged the chief baker as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Think on me, Joseph had said to the chief butler, think on me when thou art restored to favor and mention me to Pharaoh. For I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews.

It was very ungrateful in the butler, safe out of the dungeon, to forget Joseph so soon, but that is too often the way of the world.

XV

DREAMS THAT CAME TRUE

PHARAOH was the greatest king on earth, but he was not so great that dreams could not trouble him. After the chief butler went back to his place, and while poor Joseph still stayed in the dungeon, forgotten, Pharaoh one night dreamed and the dreams made him unhappy. He was sure they meant something very important but he could not decide what this might be and none of his wise men could tell him. Shall we wonder that everybody around was disturbed, when the king went frowning and muttering about the palace, refusing to eat and scolding about trifles till nobody knew what would happen? Pharaoh could do exactly what he pleased, which is a very bad thing for any one, whether he is a king or just a simple person like one of us. You may think, my children, that it is a fine thing to have your own way but, believe me, it is not. Often it is the worst thing that can

occur to poor men and women, as it would be to boys and girls, to be able to carry out every caprice and whim. Pharaoh could by a word take a poor prisoner out of a cell and make him the first nobleman in the land, or he could, with a word, without a trial, order a dozen men's heads cut off.

Shall we read this wonderful story of dreams that came true, Joseph's old dreams when a happy boy at home and Pharaoh's dreams on his soft couch, as they are written for us in the Bible?

The river spoken of in Pharaoh's dream is the River Nile.

And it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed; and, behold, he stood by the river.

And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favored kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favored and leanfleshed, and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river.

And the ill favored and leanfleshed kine did

eat up the seven well favored and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

And he slept and dreamed the second time; and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

And behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke and, behold, it was a dream.

And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all the wise men thereof; and Pharaoh told them his dreams; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

Then spoke the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:

Pharaoh was wroth with his servant and put me in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker:

And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

And there was there with us a young man,

an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream did he interpret.

And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored to mine office and him he hanged.

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved himself and changed his raiment and came in unto Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream and there is none that can interpret it; and I have heard of thee that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favored; and they fed in a meadow.

And, behold, seven other kine came up after

them, poor and very ill favored and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness:

And the lean and ill favored kine did eat up the first seven fat kine.

And when they had eaten them up it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favored, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them.

And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears; and I told this unto the magicians, but there was none that could declare it to me.

And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

The seven good kine are seven years and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

And the seven thin and ill favored kine that came up after them are seven years and the

seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he showeth unto Pharaoh.

Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt.

And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

And for that the dream was repeated unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God and God will shortly bring it to pass.

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man, discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

Let Pharaoh do this and let him appoint officers over the land and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

XVI

JOSEPH IN POWER

THE wisdom and modesty of the young Hebrew pleased Pharaoh very much. He listened, he approved and he decided without any slow delay or waiting to consult and consider.

What Joseph recommended was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants, courtiers and wise men.

He said to those around him, What better can we do than to accept what Joseph has said? Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?

They talked aside for a few minutes, while Joseph stood apart. What thoughts went through his mind, who can tell? Was he to go back to his dungeon? Would Pharaoh release him and give him some little post of service? Would Pharaoh perhaps let him go back again to the old father in the land of Canaan?

Joseph stood there, wondering, but he did

not have to wait long. Pharaoh called him and he knelt at the foot of the throne. But the monarch lifted him up and Joseph heard him saying, as if in a dream, yet knowing himself wide awake,

Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

Thou shalt be over my house and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled; only on the throne will I be greater than thou.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

Then with the royal oath, he said, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

As Joseph was now prime minister of the richest country in the world and his power was next to that of the king it was needful, the king thought, that he should have a wife. The king picked out a lovely maiden whose name was Asenath, not a daughter of the common people, but a girl whose father was a priest of Pharaoh's religion. The priests were scholars and noblemen, so Joseph was married to a wife who could give him any help he

needed in the knowledge of everyday ways among the learned people of Egypt.

But the Lord was with him and this was the best thing of all.

By this time Joseph was thirty years old. He was a thoughtful man and he went about his work as a man should, with diligence. He went all over Egypt and explored the country thoroughly.

All happened as he had said it would. In the seven plentiful years the crops were large. The earth brought forth by handfuls.

Joseph gathered up all the food of the seven good years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; the harvest of the field which was around every city he laid up in the same.

And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he stopped numbering it; for it was beyond counting.

During these years of joy and wealth two little sons came into Joseph's home, Manasseh and Ephraim. As he looked in their little faces he gave God thanks for the great kindness He had shown him in the strange land.

But hardly had these children grown old enough to climb on their father's knee when the years of plenty ended and the years of famine came.

Seven years of plenty! Seven years of famine! You don't know what famine means, dear child. But there are children in the world who do. Blue-eyed children in Finland, dark-eyed children in India, have known what it means to be hungry, day after day, so hungry that they grew too weak to cry for food. In famine children have starved and died. No food for the mother and the baby! No food for the workingman! No food for the cattle!

This state of things, a state of want and misery, followed the years of plenty and extended over the whole known world. There was corn in Egypt and the people there had bread enough for themselves and bread enough to sell to others. The story of this went far and wide and presently caravans began to arrive in Egypt, men bringing gold and silver and gems to offer in exchange for Egypt's precious corn. Laid up in Egypt's granaries and storehouses by Joseph's prudent

care, there it was, plenty of corn to feed the hungry world.

When first the scarcity was felt in Egypt, the people there did not realize what had been done and they went to Pharaoh, as to a father, begging for help.

Go to Joseph, he said, Do whatever he tells you to do.

Then Joseph opened the storehouses and sold the grain and the dread of the famine left the hearts of the people. The good news was carried to other lands, not as it would be now, by printing press and telegraph, but by word of mouth, by one man telling another, and one day Jacob heard it in the old home in Canaan.

XVII

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

WHEN you read the rest of Joseph's story you must not forget that these brothers who came down to Egypt were the very ones who had thrown Joseph into the empty pit and then sold him into slavery. They came to Egypt to buy corn, bringing money to pay for it, the famine being sore in their country. They did not bring Benjamin. His father did not like to trust his youngest son in their care. Benjamin was very dear to him, now that he had lost Joseph.

Joseph was as you know the governor over the land, and it was he who sold to all the people of the land; and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.

And Joseph saw his brethren and he knew them, but made himself strange to them and spoke roughly to them; and he said coldly, Whence come ye? And they said, From the

land of Canaan to buy food. The Bible says that Joseph knew his brethren and they knew him not. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies. And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father and one is not.

And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies.

Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, unless your youngest brother come hither.

Send one of you and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you; or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies.

JOSEPH IN POWER

And he put them together into prison three days.

And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God. If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison; go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses; but bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified and ye shall not die. And they did so.

It seems strange that these brothers suspected nothing when the grave and powerful personage they bowed down before asked so many questions, and so insisted on their return with their brother. But they could not connect this stately man with the lad they had abused and sent into slavery. Yet conscience stirred within them, and they said sorrowfully to one another,

We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

Then Reuben answered them, saying, Said I not unto you, Do not sin against the child;

and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he talked with them through an interpreter.

And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again and communed with them and took from them Simeon and bound him before their eyes.

Joseph gave some strange orders about these men, but they were at once obeyed, for none of the Egyptians questioned any command of Joseph's.

Joseph ordered men to fill their sacks with corn and to restore every man's money to his sack and to give them provision for the way; and thus did he do unto them.

So they loaded their beasts with corn and departed thence.

And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. And he said to his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack; and their heart failed them and they were afraid,

saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?

When the travelers reached home at last they had a remarkable story to relate to the good old man who waited for them there. He had been very anxious, for they had been long away. The three days in prison had detained them, and they came home, drooping and worried and weary. They told Jacob, The man who is the lord of the land spoke roughly to us and took us for spies of the country.

And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies.

We be twelve brethren, sons of one father; one is not and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

And the man, the lord of the country, said to us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households and be gone;

And bring your youngest brother to me; then shall I know that ye are no spies but that ye are true men; so will I deliver you your brother and ye shall traffic in the land.

They opened their sacks of grain, and, lo, every man's bundle of money was in his sack, and when they saw it and their father saw it, they were afraid.

And Joseph their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not and Simeon is not and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me.

But Reuben pleaded with his father, saying, Slay my two sons if I bring him not to thee; deliver him into my hand and I will bring him to thee again.

And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead and he is left alone; if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

XVIII

THE SILVER CUP, AND BENJAMIN

THE famine was sore in the land of Canaan. The first supply of corn was eaten and the little children were again beginning to cry for food.

Jacob said to his sons, Go again to Egypt and buy us a little food.

But Judah said earnestly, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, You shall not see my face except your brother be with you.

If thou wilt send our brother with us we will go down and buy thee food;

But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down; for the man said unto us, You shall not see my face except your brother be with you.

And Israel said, Wherefore dealt you so ill with me as to tell the man that you had yet a brother?

And they said unto him, The man asked us straitly of our state and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have you another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words; could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?

And Judah said to Israel his father, Send the lad with me and we will arise and go; that we may live and not die, both we and thou and also our little ones.

I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him; if I bring him not unto thee and set him before thee then let me bear the blame forever.

For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

Then Israel their father answered, If it must be so now, do this: take the best fruits in the land in your vessels and carry down the man a present, a little balm and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts and almonds:

And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight:

Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man:

And God Almighty give you mercy before the man that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

So they went again carrying the gift with them, carrying the double money and taking Benjamin. They went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.

And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home and slay and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon.

And the man did as Joseph bade and brought the men into Joseph's house.

And the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time we are brought in; that he may seek occasion against us and fall upon us and take us for bondmen and seize our asses.

And they came near to the steward of

Joseph's house and they communed with him at the door of the house,

And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food:

And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; and we have brought it again in our hand.

And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food; we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks.

The steward said, Peace be to you, fear not; your God and the God of your father hath given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money. He brought Simeon out to them, Simeon who had been held as a hostage.

Next they were conducted into Joseph's house and water was given them, and they washed their feet; and the man gave their asses provender.

And they made ready the present against Joseph should come at noon; for they heard that they should eat bread there.

And when Joseph came home they brought

him the present which was in their hand and bowed themselves before him to the earth.

And he asked them of their welfare and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spoke? Is he yet alive?

And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health; he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads and made obeisance.

And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

Seeing Benjamin, his mother's son, the brother who was his very own and who had not had any hand in the old wrong and hate, almost overcame Joseph. He went away alone and wept. His tears fell fast and they washed away the anger that had been in his heart. But Joseph had already forgiven his brothers. He was too big a man and had too big a heart to hold a grudge, still, he felt that he must yet further try them.

They ate by themselves, Joseph sitting at his own table, and he sent portions to them all, but to Benjamin he sent five times as much as to any of the others.

And now it was time for them to go back to Canaan and take Benjamin home to the old father. Joseph again ordered his steward to fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they could possibly carry, and to return every man's money.

But, he said, Put my silver cup into the sack of the youngest.

Very early the next morning, before the sun was high in the sky, they started.

They had not gone very far before pell-mell with hurry and haste a company of policemen, with Joseph's steward at their head, came pelting after them.

Up, Joseph had said to the steward, follow those men, overtake them and ask why have they returned evil for good? Inquire why they have carried off my silver cup and bring them back.

The steward did as he was bid. Now indeed were Joseph's brethren distressed and dismayed. They declared their innocence. They exclaimed,

God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing;

Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan; how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, let him die, and we also will be thy lord's bondmen.

The steward agreed, saying, Now also let it be according unto your words; he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.

Alas! the cup was found—in Benjamin's sack.

With hearts almost breaking, they rent their clothes, laded their beasts and all forlorn, they returned to the city they had so lately left.

I fancy that Joseph meant to test them and to see whether they were ready to desert Benjamin and leave him to be a bondman in Egypt. He knew they had been capable of that wickedness in the old days. He desired to try them now.

But God had changed their hearts. When he sternly taxed them with theft, his brother Judah stood up valiantly and became the

champion of them all and made a most eloquent plea for Benjamin. Judah had told his father that he would defend Benjamin with his life if need be. He now nobly redeemed his promise.

Boldly Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord, what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servant; behold, we are my lord's servants, both we and he also with whom the cup is found.

Joseph replied, God forbid that I should do so; but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, O my lord, let thy servant I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh.

My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother?

And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he

alone is left of his mother and his father loveth him.

And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me that I may set mine eyes upon him.

And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you ye shall see my face no more.

And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father we told him the words of my lord.

And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food.

And we said, We cannot go down; if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face except our youngest brother be with us.

And thy servant, my father, said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons;

And the one went out from me and I said: Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since;

And if ye take this son also from me and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Now therefore when I go to thy servant, my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

It will come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he shall die; and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee then will I bear the blame to my father forever.

Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide, instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

For how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

XIX

I AM JOSEPH

AT this Joseph could no longer feign anger. His heart was melted into love and forgiveness. He cried out suddenly, Cause every man to go away from me. And there was not one Egyptian present when he made himself known to his brethren. But before he spoke his feeling of pity so overcame him that he cried aloud.

In the house of Pharaoh they heard him and wondered what had so overcome their master. Probably the older ones guessed for they knew that, more than twenty years before this, Joseph had been a slave, sold away from his people and his father's house.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled in his presence.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near.

And he said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

Now therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.

For these two years hath the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years in which there shall neither be seed time nor harvest.

And God sent me before you to preserve your families on the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Haste ye, and go up to my father and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me and tarry not;

And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children and thy children's children and thy flocks and thy herds and all that thou hast.

And there will I nourish thee; for yet there

are five years of famine; lest thou and thy household and all that thou hast come to poverty.

And, behold, your eyes see and the eyes of my brother Benjamin that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

Moreover he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them; and after that his brethren talked with him.

The news was brought to Pharaoh's palace where men said, Joseph's brethren are come; and Pharaoh was very glad.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do; lade your beasts and go; get you to the land of Canaan;

And take your father and your households and come unto me; and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt; and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

Now art thou commanded, this do: take wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives and bring your father and come.

Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.

And the children of Israel did this; and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the way.

Also he gave each man a change of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of raiment.

To his aged father he sent after this manner: ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

So he sent his brethren away and they departed; and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

One morning in the old home in Canaan Jacob looked forth and saw a great train approaching, and when Benjamin, fleet of foot, ran ahead and threw his arms about his father's neck and the amazing word was said,

Joseph is alive and is ruler of the whole land of Egypt, it seemed to him a fairy tale. He could not understand it. He grew faint and ill. Through weary years he had mourned bitterly for a Joseph who was dead. And now they told him Joseph was living. He thought they were deceived. But he looked out and there were the wagons standing by the door. His spirit revived. He believed when he saw the wagons.

Then Jacob said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die.

XX

JACOB IN EGYPT

TO an old patriarch like Jacob it was no small matter to leave his home and go away to live in a land he did not know. It was like transplanting an old oak tree. But God spoke to him in a vision and told him to go. God said, I will go down with thee to Egypt and I will surely bring thee up again, and Joseph shall surely put his hand on thine eyes.

So Jacob went with all his children and grandchildren, a very great company.

Joseph made ready his chariot and went to the border to meet him. They met in the land of Goshen. Joseph fell on his father's neck and kissed him and Jacob's heart was comforted at last.

Joseph instructed his family what to say when they should be presented to Pharaoh. He brought five of the twelve before the king and, when the king graciously asked their occupation, they said, To sojourn in the land we

have come, for the famine is sore in Canaan and thy servants have no pasture for their flocks.

Pharaoh was very kind. He said to Joseph, The land of Egypt is before thee. In the best of it make thy father and thy brethren dwell. If any of the men are competent make them rulers over my cattle.

When Joseph brought in his venerable father and presented him to Pharaoh, the aged Jacob spread out his hands and gave the great king his blessing.

Pharaoh said to Jacob, How old art thou?

And Jacob answered Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

Though Joseph had his family near him in the fruitful land of Goshen, he could not stay with them, for the famine now began to be felt keenly everywhere, growing worse as the years went on. His hands were full, managing the king's revenues and keeping the peace

and little by little, in the latter part of the famine, Joseph bought up the land of the Egyptians and made them pay more and more in taxes to the crown. But they had food and seed for future harvests and they did not much complain. Joseph was a wise and shrewd man who knew how to govern others. The dreams of his youthful days had come true.

His old father lived seventeen years after he came to Egypt and died when he was one hundred and forty-seven years old. He had had a mingled life, a good deal of success and a good deal of sorrow, but he loved and served God and, dying, he blessed his sons and foretold what should happen to them long years afterward.

To Joseph, he gave the most beautiful blessing of all. He laid his old wrinkled hand on the heads of Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and to Ephraim he gave the better blessing, though Joseph begged him to remember that Manasseh was the first born.

He said, The Angel who redeemed me from all evil bless the lads; and let my name be named on them and the name of my fathers,

Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

He said to Joseph, Behold, I die, but God shall be with you and bring you again into the land of your fathers.

To each of his sons the old man spoke a beautiful last word, but this was what he said to Joseph:

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall:

The archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him and hated him.

But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel).

Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under.

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph and on the

crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

The long life was ended. Jacob was gathered to his fathers. The physicians of Egypt embalmed his body and Joseph, with a great train, went up to Canaan to bury his father. The sons of Jacob left their wives and their little ones in Goshen and they went to the old burial place that Abraham had bought from Ephron the Hittite. Here Jacob had wished to be laid beside Isaac and Abraham.

The brothers felt a little afraid that Joseph would not be their friend when his father was gone, but he told them not to fear. He spoke to them most lovingly.

Joseph lived to be one hundred and ten years old. When he died he charged his people, at some future day, to carry his bones to Canaan. His body was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt.

Four hundred years passed by. Then a child was born who became a great leader of his people, and he took the bones of Joseph away from Egypt and bore them to the land of Canaan.

XXI

THE BASKET AMONG THE REEDS

IT was all well with the Hebrews so long as Joseph lived. But in the years after Joseph died great changes came to pass. The Pharaoh of Joseph's time died too and the kings of his line all died as the centuries went by. Other kings came, kings who knew nothing about Joseph and cared nothing for the services he had rendered the ancient Pharaoh. They saw the increasing host of the Hebrews with great dislike and jealous fear and oppressed them with a heavy hand. They made them serve with hard and bitter bondage, set stern taskmasters over them, and compelled them to build cities and other great works. It is thought that the great pyramids, that some of you may one day see, were built by the toil of the poor Hebrews.

They were made to labor in the field, to labor with mortar and brick; if they did not do what their taskmasters appointed they

were beaten and their lives were terribly hard, so that they longed to get out of this dreadful land and away from this cruel bondage.

Pharaoh finally became more cruel than ever. He hated to see this race that was toiling for him grow stronger by the births of children and he made a law that every little Hebrew baby, if a boy, should be thrown into the river and drowned. He sent men about to snatch the babies from their mothers and the mothers were frantic with grief. A king's edict though ever so cruel could not be disobeyed.

All over the land of Goshen there were empty cradles. The little girls were spared but the boys were slain.

Little did Pharaoh care. His heart was hard as flint.

One mother there was who hid her babe away. She watched and, when she saw a spy coming, she kept her baby out of his clutches. But she knew that she could not do this very long. By and bye the baby's cries would surely be heard.

She hit upon a good plan. She took some

THE BABE WEPT

of the long pliant rushes that grew by the River Nile and wove of them a basket, a basket like a little cradle. She made it waterproof with pitch, and she lined it with a little soft quilt and in it she laid her rosy baby when he was fast asleep. She carried basket and baby and tucked them down in a hiding place among the reeds by the river's brink. The baby's sister stood, not close by, but near enough to see what might befall the little one. No doubt the mother watched too, coming and going. They were afraid of the crocodiles, but not half so afraid of them as of the cruel soldiers of the wicked king.

After awhile the king's daughter with her maidens came down to the river to bathe. She soon noticed the pretty basket among the reeds.

Go and bring that basket to me, she ordered a maid, and the basket was brought.

Open it, she commanded.

It was opened, and there lay the most beautiful child the princess had ever seen.

Oh, the sweet babe! she cried, the darling! Lift him and give him to me.

The babe had cried, frightened by the strange faces. The princess knew at once that he was a child of the Hebrews, a child her father meant to kill. But she determined to save this little one. Her heart was full of pity.

Just then a little girl came running up, all out of breath.

Shall I go, she said, and call a nurse for thee, from the Hebrew women, to nurse this baby?

Yes, said the princess, Go. The girl needed no second bidding. Away she ran and brought her mother.

Take this child, said Pharaoh's daughter, and nurse it for me and I will give thee thy wages.

The beautiful child grew; and when he was old enough, the mother took him to the king's daughter and he became her adopted son. And she called him Moses because, she said, I drew him out of the water.

XXII

MOSES IN THE DESERT

THE little child whom the princess brought up was taught everything a child ought to know. There were learned men in Egypt then, and they became his teachers. He grew up graceful, polished and refined, and the learning of the best schools was his.

Later on, when Moses was older, he was spoken of as the meekest of men. As a youth he was not meek but was of a quick and fiery temper. His own mother, who had been his nurse, had not let him forget that he was a Hebrew and, though brought up by an Egyptian lady, he was filled with the love for his own people that his Jewish mother felt.

When he was a young man he stood one day looking on where the Hebrews were toiling in the hot sun under their cruel masters. He saw an Egyptian strike a Hebrew. Quick as a flash his arm shot out and the Egyptian

lay dead at his feet. He left him there with the yellow sands drifting over his body. Trained in the palace of the king he did not care very much about having slain a man of the common people. Such deeds were very frequent.

But the next day when he saw two Hebrews fighting he interfered and reproved them, and one of them said tauntingly, Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Are you going to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?

Moses knew that, if this report got abroad, Pharaoh would kill him. He may not have been a favorite with the king. Pharaoh did try to kill him and Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh.

He left the princess and the court and took his journey into the land of Midian.

Weary and dusty he sat down by a wayside well.

The priest of Midian had seven daughters and they came to the well trough to water their father's flocks.

Rough shepherds drove them away, but a

stranger with gentle manners and a charming air stood up, waved back the boorish crowd and watered the sheep.

The young girls went home and told their father the tale and he went out and invited him into his house. One of the girls, Zipporah, became the wife of Moses.

Many years went silently by. The days were exactly alike in the desert and Moses lived the simple life of a humble shepherd and was contented.

One day he saw something strange, a bush all on fire. The red flames glowed in it, the scarlet tongues played around it, but the bush did not burn up. The fire glorified it. The bush burned but was not consumed.

And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

And he said, Draw not hither; put thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows;

And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

And Moses said unto God, Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh and that I should

bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

And God said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

And Moses said unto God, Behold, When I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name; what shall I say unto them?

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and he said, Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

XXIII

LET MY PEOPLE GO

GOD further told Moses that Pharaoh would not let the Hebrews go without a great struggle. But He said they should go and that they should not go forth empty. They should carry forth gold and silver and jewels, the spoil of the Egyptians, for which they had worked hard and long.

Moses was very much afraid that he could not plead with Pharaoh or become a real leader of his people. He said, Lord, I am not eloquent, I am slow of speech. I have a slow tongue.

Who maketh the dumb or the deaf or the seeing or the blind? said the Lord. I will be with thee and teach thee what to say. And Aaron, thy brother, will be glad to see thee and he shall be my spokesman with the people.

Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, let him go with his wife and his sons and they went down to Egypt. It was so long

since he had been there that the men who had sought Moses' life were all dead.

In his hands he had a slender rod, the rod of God. With this, Moses went in one day to Pharaoh's court. He had previously told the Hebrews that God had remembered them and that they were to go back to their own land.

To Pharaoh he said boldly, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel. Let my people go that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

Pharaoh utterly refused.

Who is the Lord, he exclaimed, and why should I obey Him? I know not the Lord, and I will not let Israel go.

Moses and Aaron tried again to persuade him. The God of the Hebrews, they said, hath met with us. He would have His people go into the desert and offer sacrifices to Him.

The king was in a rage.

What do you mean, O Moses and Aaron, he cried, by making the people dissatisfied? Let them work. Get you to your burdens.

Then he sent for his taskmasters and ordered them to make the people of Israel work

very much harder than they had ever done. They were to make more bricks than they had ever made and, if they did not fulfil their daily tasks, they were to be beaten; but they were not to have any straw given them with which to make the bricks. They were to be scourged with whips if the work was not done but they were to find the stubble and straw for themselves. Their bondage was to be even worse than before Moses interfered.

The people of Israel were always very ungrateful and they had acquired by this time the temper of slaves. They turned on Moses and Aaron and angrily found fault with them.

You have made everything harder, they said bitterly. Why could you not have left well enough alone?

But Moses did not answer them. He only went to God and prayed. In the desert he had learned to pray.

XXIV

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

AGAIN Moses stood before Pharaoh with the same urgent plea. But he stood bravely, now, as if he too were a king. For God had said,

Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand shall he let my people go and drive them out of his land. I AM THE LORD. I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob by the Name of God Almighty, but by My Name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage and I have remembered my covenant.

The people were so crushed that they paid very little attention to Moses, but he kept right on preaching to them, praying for them and speaking right out of his heart to Pharaoh.

One morning Pharaoh stood by the river and from among the rushes arose Moses.

He said, O King Pharaoh, the Lord God says, Let my people go.

And if you still refuse I will smite this river with the rod in my hand, and all its sweet pure waters shall be turned into blood. The fish shall die. Every drop of water in streams and wells and in Pharaoh's house shall be turned to blood unless you let the people of God go. Pharaoh laughed. But for seven days there was no water in Egypt, only dark thick foul smelling blood.

After this Moses brought on the land a dreadful plague of frogs. They swarmed over everything. They jumped out of the flour and out of the bread pan, out of the pots in the closet and the dishes on the table, out of the couches and the cushions, out of the curtains and the rugs. They were in everybody's house alike. They overran the palace and the hut and drove people fairly wild, from the king to the poorest laborer.

Now Pharaoh sent for Moses and said, Entreat the Lord for me to take away this pest of frogs and I will let the people go.

When shall I entreat the Lord? said Moses.

To-morrow, answered Pharaoh.

To-morrow came and the frogs died. They were swept out in heaps and burned, but, once they were gone, Pharaoh's heart grew hard and he again refused to let God's people go.

Other plagues God sent by Moses, plagues of illness, of painful boils, of dreadful insects, flies, locusts, hail and thick darkness. At each plague Pharaoh promised to release the people and, as soon as it was over, his heart grew hard and he broke his word.

He would not let the people go.

At last there was sent a more dreadful visitation than any that had gone before. The locusts eating every green herb, the flies settling down in a cloud, the darkness in which people groped about in the daytime as if it were the middle of the night, were bad enough; but Pharaoh kept his stubborn resolution through them all, not to let God's people go.

But when nothing else would move him, God sent down the Angel of Death.

XXV

THE STORY OF THE PASSOVER

THE Lord told Moses and Aaron to speak to the children of Israel and bid them prepare for a new and solemn rite. It was the beginning of a great national feast, to be kept in all ages and known as the Passover. The Jews keep it still, wherever they are; in their homes it is as sacred now as when first their fathers observed it in Egypt.

Each family was to take a lamb without spot or blemish, kill it and, with its blood, put a sign on the door posts of the house, on the two side posts and the upper lintel. The flesh of the lamb was to be roasted and the family were to eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Nothing was to be left over. Whatever was left after the meal was to be burned. They were to eat it, dressed for a journey and in haste, their loins girded, their sandals on their feet, every man with his staff in his hand.

Fathers and mothers and little ones were to eat this meal together. It was the Lord's Passover.

They did not yet fully understand what this feast meant but on the night when they ate it there came flying down on the wings of the wind a dark and terrible angel. He did not stop at or enter any house where the sign of the blood was on the door. Every such house the angel passed over. But every other house in Egypt he entered and every flock and every stall and every stable. Wherever the angel entered there was instantly the death of the first born of man or of beast. The king on his throne, the beggar at the gate, the peasant in the hut, the servant, the nobleman, the day laborer, all alike were in deep and awful grief, for each had lost at one blow a dear child.

But the angel had passed over the homes where God's people dwelt. In their homes, the homes of Pharaoh's slaves, were light and music and mirth, and they kept a feast.

God commanded them to keep this feast forever through all their generations. Ages later, when Jesus came to earth, a Jewish Child

brought up in a Jewish home, He kept the Passover in His manhood with His disciples.

Still in the devout Hebrew household the youngest child asks, What mean ye by this service? and the father answers,

It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses.

When the midnight fell, as the Angel of Death went by there was a great cry in Egypt, a cry of sorrow and despair. Pharaoh rose in the night and sent for Moses and Aaron and said,

Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord as ye have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone! Then, he added, as an afterthought, and bless me also.

For the moment his iron will was broken and his hard heart was soft.

As for the Egyptians, they could not hurry the Israelites away fast enough. They fairly speeded them on their journey. Haste, haste,

they cried, get out of our borders or we shall all be dead men. They gave them whatever they asked for.

The Israelites packed their possessions swiftly; they did not need to be urged. The women took the dough that was in their kneading bowls and bound it just as it was in bundles on their shoulders; they snatched up their children and ran as if for life.

Jacob and his sons had brought in to Egypt a little company four hundred and thirty years earlier. They left Egypt an immense host, six hundred thousand men, besides women and children. They had, besides, great droves of cattle. A mixed multitude of other people followed them, some probably of the baser type of Egyptians, and this rabble caused them trouble before they reached the land of Canaan. The hosts of the Lord were none the better for the worshippers of idols who became their camp followers.

God was now with Moses all the time, giving him marching orders. He told him not to lead the Israelites by the shortest route lest the warlike Philistines should frighten them,

but to go by a roundabout pathway through the wilderness that skirted the Red Sea.

By day the Lord tempered the fierce desert heat for them by a vast pillar of cloud.

By night He guarded their steps by a great pillar of fire; and so they journeyed onward from Egypt to the Promised Land.

XXVI

THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

BEFORE very long Pharaoh began to regret his hasty action in letting go so great a number of people who were useful to him in his kingdom. He did not mourn very long for the child he had lost nor waste much time before trying to get the Israelites back.

He made ready his chariots and mustered his horsemen. Six hundred chariots formed his body guard. He rallied his troops and pursued the Hebrews and, as they were on foot and encumbered with children, cattle and sheep, he hoped soon to overtake them. He would easily have routed them and driven them back if earthly prowess and power could have availed, but the Angel of the Lord fought for Israel. By day the pillar of cloud confused him while it sheltered them. It was like a blanket of fog to Pharaoh and hindered him greatly. At night the pillar of fire that

guided the Israelites was a pillar of smoke and darkness to the foe.

But the Egyptian army came so near at last that the Hebrews were in despair. Remember, children, that they had the hearts of slaves. They had so long been terrified by their oppressors that their courage was gone and they had as yet very little real faith in JEHOVAH.

When they found themselves with the sea in front of them and the enemy behind they stormed at Moses.

Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that thou hast taken us to die in the wilderness? We might far better have stayed in Egypt and served than have been brought here to perish.

But the undaunted soul of Moses did not waver. He stood there, splendid and strong.

Fear not, he said: Stand still and see the salvation of God, which He will show you today. The Egyptians whom ye see this day ye shall see no more forever.

The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace.

GO FORWARD

Moses called on God for help. He knew God would not forsake him now. Ringing down from heaven into the brave heart came the answer of JEHOVAH,

Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.

Where and how were they to go? There was the Red Sea before them, its waves tossing; there was no bridge; there were no boats.

Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.

Moses lifted up that wonderful magical rod of his over the sea. As he did so, the great billows rolled back before a mighty east wind that blew and blew and blew all one night; the fugitives walked over the dry bed of the sea, with the billows like a wall of emerald beyond them. Every man, every woman, every child, every hoof went safe across the Red Sea. Confused by the strange cloud that was the protection of the Hebrews, Pharaoh and his host in the wake of the long column came dashing furiously on. They rushed headlong after it into the dry bed of the sea, as the hunter rushes on the heels of his prey.

The heavy chariots stuck fast in the wet sand and the wheels came off. The host of Pharaoh were discouraged. Well they might be. One to another they said, Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

As they spoke, the rear guard of the Hebrews touched the opposite shore and Moses lifted up that terrible rod. Back fell the great green wall of water. The sea returned to its place and swallowed up the king and his men. Pharaoh and his chariots were lost in the engulfing waves; Moses and his people sang praises to JEHOVAH.

XXVII

FORTY WEARY YEARS

ALTHOUGH the children of Israel were safely over the Red Sea, with Pharaoh and his host drowned in its depths, their troubles were not at an end. They had been in bondage so long that they had lost their ancient spirit; as you have seen by their murmuring against Moses, they had very little courage. Besides this they had lost, among their heathen neighbors, the old reverence for their fathers' God, and many of them had taken up idol worship. The mixed multitude who were with them, composed of the lowest classes in Egypt, the idle and the ignorant, helped to stir up the worst elements in the Hebrews. Moses had a tremendous task before him in making laws for such people, people who thought being free meant to have no laws at all. He and Aaron had again to teach them the religion and the rites of Abraham, Isaac

and Jacob, and, as they set out to the Promised Land, which was now occupied by wild and hostile tribes, the two brothers were often discouraged. But God was with Moses and Aaron.

As the Hebrews were not yet fit for either freedom or fighting, God kept them for forty years in the wilderness. This great wilderness was their schoolroom. All the time they were under God's constant care. He fed them with manna, for little food could be found in the desert.

This manna, a little round golden ball, fell nightly from the sky and in the morning the people gathered it and took it into their tents. There was always just enough for one day, except on the sixth day when enough manna fell to last the whole camp two days. God forbade the people to do any work, even to gather manna, on the day of rest.

When they began, in their ingratitude, to say that they did not care for manna and wished they were back in Egypt to have leeks and onions and flesh pots again, God sent them quails in great abundance. But they ate

the quails so greedily that they were made ill; and many died: they were thankful to have the sweet healthful manna once more.

God gave them water to quench their thirst, and spread his sheltering cloud above them to keep away the fierceness of the desert sun. Once Moses, angered at their continual complaints, struck the rock at Horeb with his rod and brought forth a stream of cool water, but God was displeased with his servant for showing a hot temper and rebuked him. Perhaps Moses at that moment forgot that he was only God's instrument; at any rate, it was because of this sin that Moses never entered the Promised Land but only saw its beauty from a distance.

I think I must explain to you, children, what the real meaning of meekness is, for, as I have once before told you, Moses was praised for his meekness. To be meek is not to be weak, nor to be of a soft yielding nature, that gives way to everybody without a struggle. To be meek is to have a temper that is under your control, as a horse is controlled by bit and bridle. We are not to be praised if we have

no temper, but if we have a quick temper and govern it we are to be commended. To keep back the hasty word, to be silent when people make us angry, to think before we act, is to be meek. There is nothing mean or cowardly in meekness.

Moses had many seasons of prayer and of communion with the Lord while the forty years went by in the wilderness. The older men were gradually dying and the younger ones were growing up, under the teaching and training of Aaron and Moses, during this long period.

The Ten Commandments were spoken from heaven and given to Moses at this time. Even while Moses was communing with God on the Holy Mount, the people at its foot persuaded Aaron to make for them a golden calf which they might worship. They had learned idol worship in Egypt. When Moses came down from the Mount he had in his hand two tables of stone on which God with His own finger had written the law. In his indignation at the wickedness of the people Moses dropped these tables and they were

dashed in pieces. Afterward, God again gave his laws to Moses and Moses wrote them down. Some day you will learn these commandments by heart, and lay them up in memory.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter,

thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

The neighboring peoples were much disturbed when they saw the great hosts of the Hebrews. They began to tremble and Balak, King of the Amonites, took what he thought was a splendid measure to get rid of them. He sent for a prophet, a man supposed to know

God's mind in what was going on in the earth, and asked him to curse the intruders for him.

Balaam was not a very good man, though he was a prophet and could foretell the future. In his heart he hated the strange newcomers and he wanted very much to please Balak, who was ready to reward him if only he would curse the Hebrews with a loud and deep curse.

Let nothing hinder thee from coming to me, his message had been to Balaam. Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt that covereth the face of the earth.

But God said to Balaam in a voice that he heard in his heart, and with a look he saw in a vision.

Thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.

Balak promised the prophet great honor and power and riches if only he would oblige him.

But Balaam declared that if a house full of silver and gold were given him, and all the honor in the world, he dared not disobey the word of the Lord.

Balaam was in an odd predicament. He

was a prophet who unwillingly spoke what God told him to speak but who had no love for God in his heart. He rose early one morning, saddled his ass, and set out for the mountains of Moab.

An angel of God came out to bar his way and stood before him with a drawn sword, but Balaam rode right on. He did not see the angel or the sword. Animals can sometimes perceive sights that men do not see. The dumb beast saw the angel and swerved out of the road into the field, and Balaam smote her for her stupidity.

Then the angel again barred the way. The ass swerved and the prophet struck her. This was repeated three times and then the poor creature opened her mouth and said,

Why do you treat me so? What have I done?

If I had a sword, cried the angry man, I would kill you.

Did I ever do anything like this before? said the ass. Is there not some reason? Why treat me so cruelly?

At this, Balaam's eyes suddenly grew clear

and he saw the angel standing there with the sharp and threatening sword. The angel told him plainly that he owed his life to the ass and warned him that he was to speak to Balak nothing but the truth.

In the end, when the prophet stood before Balak and his train of chiefs, he blessed Israel again and again, for no curse would God let him proclaim against them.

Moses kept on, while this by-play was made, knowing nothing of it all. He had his work to do. Busy with a thousand things, managing every little detail and settling every dispute and carrying heavy burdens, when Moses was an old man, one hundred and twenty years old, the Lord took him home to heaven. His eye was not dim. He was not feeble, nor tottering, but he was tired and ready to go. He said a great many beautiful farewell words to the people.

One day the Lord said to his servant Moses, Go up into the Mountain of Nebo in the land of Moab and view from there all the possessions in the land of Canaan which I shall yet give the children of Israel. There shalt thou

die as Aaron thy brother died in Mount Hor. Moses heard and obeyed. With steady step and head erect and eyes as keen as an eagle's, he climbed the steep and lonely mountain and looked across at the hills and valleys that were widespread before him. Then he saw another and more beautiful land above him, a land so lovely that he was glad when the sky opened and a band of white and shining angels came flying down to him. Moses closed his eyes and slept. The angels carried his brave soul up to God, and they buried his body on the hill top where it lay. No man ever found that grave.

XXVIII

WHEN JERICHO FELL DOWN

JOSHUA had a big enterprise on his hands when he took command of Israel after the death of Moses. But he had a trained army, that by this time had learned to obey a commander. By this time, too, the people had learned to follow God's Will, and so they were better prepared to cope with and conquer the warlike tribes that had overrun the land of Canaan. These tribes had to be driven out if the Israelites were to settle down in peace and be at rest.

The story in Joshua's career most fascinating to children is that of the siege and fall of Jericho. This was a large and rich city surrounded by strong walls. Joshua knew that it was a great undertaking to attack this fortified city. Before he made the attempt he had a thrilling adventure. It was the dead of

night, every one was fast asleep. The people of Jericho could not get out, but the people of Israel could not get in. Until Jericho was theirs they could advance no further in the capture of Canaan.

Joshua was walking alone on the edge of his camp, looking at the beleaguered city, when he suddenly saw a man with a bright sword drawn in his hand.

Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? asked Joshua fearlessly.

Nay, said the man, As the Captain of the Lord's host I am come. Then Joshua prostrated himself on the ground and worshipped, for he knew that God was with him. In Eastern lands it is customary for men to slip off their shoes in a sacred place. You remember that Moses did this beside the burning bush.

Loose thy shoes from off thy feet, said the Captain of the Lord's host to Joshua. The place whereon thou standest is holy.

Acting under the orders of this mysterious personage, whom Joshua knew to be the Lord, he undertook a curious line of assault on

Jericho. The Lord said, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho and the king thereof and the mighty men of valor.

And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go around about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns; and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

And it shall come to pass that, when they make a long blast with the rams' horns and when ye hear the sound of the trumpets, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall flat and the people shall ascend every man straight before him.

And Joshua, the son of Nun, called the priests and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord.

And he said unto the people, Pass on and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the Lord.

And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the Lord and blew with the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed them.

And the armed men went before the priests that blew the trumpets, and the rearward went after the ark, the priests blowing with the trumpets as they went.

And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth until the day I bid you shout; and then shall ye shout.

So the ark of the Lord compassed the city, going about it once; and they came into the camp and lodged in the camp.

And Joshua rose early in the morning and the priests took up the ark of the Lord.

And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord went on continually and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rearward came after the ark of the Lord, the

priests going on and blowing with the trumpets.

And the second day they compassed the city once and returned into the camp; so they did six days.

And it came to pass, on the seventh day, that they rose about the dawning of the day and compassed the city after the same manner seven times; on that day only they compassed the city seven times.

And it came to pass, at the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.

Strict commands were given to the Hebrews that there should be no plundering or pillaging the city after its fall, no carrying away of loot. A woman named Rahab, who had shown a great kindness to Joshua's scouts was to be saved alive, with her household. All others were to perish with the city and the silver, gold, brass and iron were to be seized, not by the soldiers, but by those in command, for the treasury of the Lord.

In every age, dear children, war has been

unspeakably cruel. These old Bible wars were cruel. So have been the wars of all history, down to the latest war that you have read about in the newspapers. Horror and fire and death belong to war. Yet we all enjoy hearing of battles and sieges and I suppose we always shall. At all events, I hope when we do fight, we shall always fight on the right side.

Speaking of loot, a man named Achan disobeyed Joshua and hid a wedge of gold and a rich garment in his tent; being found out, he and his whole family were put to death and everything they had was burned up, by a military order.

But to go back a little. After the seven days' tramp, tramp, tramp, around the doomed city, with the incessant noise of trumpets, the people shouted with a great shout and the strong walls of Jericho fell flat. No blow had been struck. The walls simply fell and Jericho was taken.

XXIX

THE STORY OF GIDEON

THE Hebrews, after the stormy days of Joshua, succeeded in driving out their foes and taking possession of their land. In a way, the land belonged to them, for it had belonged to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and God had told them it should be theirs. And in this world, whoever fights manfully and lives according to God's laws gets the upper hand of his foes in the end. But I am always a little sorry for the Hivites and the Hittites, the Amorites and the Perrizites, those children of the land of Canaan who faded away before Israel as our own Red men have faded away before us on this continent. It was right they should go, but I am sorry for them.

They had many a tough tussle before they got through with the Moabites and the Midianites, who were always making forays

and dashing out of ambuscades. Whenever, too, the Israelites forgot God, the battle went against them.

There came a time when the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and he delivered them into the hand of the Midianites for seven years.

The Midianites drove the Israelites before them and made them hide in dens and caves and strongholds in the mountains. They could not plant or sow or reap, for the Midianites pounced upon their fields and the bands of Midian stole their oxen, their cattle, and their sheep.

The Midianites were like grasshoppers for multitude and had camels without number.

At last, when the children of Israel were disheartened, they did what they ought to have done at first. They repented of their sins and cried to the Lord for relief.

Now we come to Gideon. He was a young man of noble family, a man who loved his country and mourned over her sad plight. He was threshing his father's wheat by stealth, that he might save it from the enemy's hordes,

when he looked up and saw an angel sitting under the shadow of a great oak.

The angel said, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

Alas! said Gideon, if the Lord be with us how is it that we are so crushed? Why have all these evils befallen us and where are all the miracles of which our fathers told us?

The answer was, Go, thou, in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee?

And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house.

And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

But Gideon answered, If now I have found grace in thy sight then show me a sign that thou talkest with me.

Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

And Gideon went in and made ready a kid and unleavened cakes of fine flour; the flesh he put in a basket and the broth in a pot and brought them out unto him under the oak and presented them.

And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes and lay them upon this rock and pour out the broth. And he did so.

Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight.

And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.

And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not; thou shalt not die.

Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord and called it Jehovah-shalom; unto this day it is in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

The first thing Gideon proceeded to do was to break down an altar the men of Israel had dared to build in honor of a heathen god, named Baal, and to cut down the grove that surrounded the altar. Having thus purged the city of its wicked idolatry, he was ready to go on. And the spirit of the Lord came on Gideon and he blew a trumpet and sent messengers up and down to bid all true men rally to his standard.

Then, his faith being not quite firm, he sought a sign from God.

And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

Behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

And it was so; for he rose early on the morrow and thrust the fleece together and wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me and I will speak but this once; let me try, I pray thee, but this

once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece and upon all the ground let there be dew.

And God did so that night; for it was dry upon the fleece only and there was dew on all the ground.

Was not God very kind to convince Gideon by this sign, just as a father might convince a trembling child? But Gideon needed great encouragement.

Next morning he rose very early and looked around on his army. It was a large army of earnest men, hurriedly gathered from the borders of Asher, Zebulon and Naphtali.

And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

Now, therefore, go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water and I will try them for thee there; and it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; this shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

Gideon brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you and deliver the Midianites into thine hand; and let all the other people go every man unto his place.

So the people took victuals in their hand and their trumpets; and he sent all the rest of Israel, every man unto his tent, and re-

tained those three hundred men; and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

In the same night the Lord said to Gideon, Arise and go down to the host, for I have delivered it into thine hand.

But if thou fear to go down alone, go thou with Phurah thy servant to the host.

And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened.

Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host.

And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the East lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude.

And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his comrade and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian and came unto a tent; and smote it that it fell and overturned it, that the tent lay along.

And his comrade answered, This is noth-

ing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host.

When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and the interpretation thereof, he worshipped, and returned unto the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with an empty pitcher, and a lamp within the pitcher.

And he said unto them, Look on me, and do as I do. When I come to the outside of the camp watch me.

When I and my band blow with a trumpet, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of the camp and shout, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!

So Gideon and the hundred men that were with him came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.

The clamor of the trumpets, the crashing of the pitchers, the magnificent war cry, were too much for the surprised camp. They ran and cried and fled; and in the dark they fought each other and Gideon won a great victory.

There are some lessons here for you and me. With God on our side we need fear no foe. God does not want feeble, faint hearted people in his battles. He wants brave people who will overcome every obstacle by sheer courage. God wants people who will use the means He gives them in precisely His way. When we are right we may go fearlessly on. As Faber says,

For right is right as God is God,
And right the day must win.
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.

Nor can any of us have a better war cry than this of the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. Only in our case it may be the sword of the Lord and of Julian, the sword of the Lord and of Frederick, the sword of the Lord and of John, or whatever else the name.

XXX

SAMSON, THE STRONG MAN

IF there is anything that boys admire, and that girls too think very fine, it is strength. A boy likes to show his muscle. He is proud if he can lift a great weight, run a long distance, pitch a good ball, wrestle and box and do whatever shows skill and courage and athletic force. A boy's sister likes to be strong, too, but she does not mind being less so than her brother.

When you are old enough to study mythology you will read the wonder stories of the Greeks and will see their great hero, Hercules, performing strange feats of valor. In a very dark age of the Hebrews, when the battles they fought with the Philistines were all going wrong and their hearts were faint with distress, a Hebrew Hercules arose and Samson was his name.

He belonged to the tribe of Dan, and his

father's name was Manoah. For a long time Manoah and his wife had been childless. Finally an angel of the Lord came and promised them a son. This son was to be very carefully brought up, was never to drink wine or any fiery spirit, and his hair was never to be cut.

The good parents obeyed the angel. Samson grew up in their home, strong, clean, and devoted to his country. As the Lord had been with Gideon, the Lord was with him.

When he was a young man he one day went into the country of the Philistines when the grapes were purple in the vineyards. He was marching gaily along with great strides when, out against him in the path, what should come but a young lion with tawny mane, roaring and springing upon him. Was Samson afraid? Not a bit. The spirit of the Lord came mightily on him and, with his bare hands, he seized the lion, shook it and tore it open, throwing it down dead. He had no weapon, but his hands were enough for this deed. He thought so little about what he had done that he did not mention it to his father

and mother, but went on into Timnath of the Philistines, where lived a girl of their people who pleased him well. This girl became his wife. Returning after he had visited her, he saw that the carcass of the lion had been selected by a swarm of bees for their hive and he took of the honey and ate and carried a feast home to his people. At a banquet a little later Samson propounded a riddle.

Out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong came forth sweetness.

Nobody could guess the riddle.

The Philistines asked Samson's wife to coax him to reveal the answer but he would not tell her, though she pleaded and wept. Finally he yielded to her and said, What is sweeter than honey and what is stronger than a lion? But coldness had arisen between him and his wife and she stayed with her own people and Samson went back to his. It was a mistake for a son of Manoah the Hebrew to marry a daughter of the Philistines. Out of the quarrels with her and her family that followed, Samson grew to hate the Philistines with great bitterness. In order to be revenged

on them he sent three hundred foxes, tied together with firebrands lighted between their tails, into the standing corn of the Philistines. This was very cruel, but the times were cruel and Samson belonged to his times. The poor foxes ran madly to and fro and set fire to the corn, the grapes, the olives, and the fruit of the Philistines, causing a great destruction. When they tried to take Samson prisoner he fought them one by one, or by twos and threes, and killed so many that the rest ran away from him in dire dismay. The men went down like nine-pins before the blows which rained on their heads like hail.

The Philistines could not take Samson themselves but they encamped against the men of Judah, and these men, wearied already through many a lost battle, had no manhood left.

Why are you come up against us? they cried in a panic.

Come, cried the Philistines, Why have we come? We have reason enough. We have come to bind Samson, your champion, and we are going to serve him as he has served us.

Samson was dwelling on the top of a mountain named Etam and this mountain was really a rocky fortress.

He saw the three hundred men of Judah crawling and creeping and climbing up the steep sides of the fortress. When they were near enough they said,

It's all very well for you, but the Philistines are our rulers and masters and you are doing us more harm than good. So we have come to deliver you into their hands.

Very well, said Samson, who must have felt a good deal of contempt for these cowards; you may deliver me but swear that you will not yourselves fall upon me and kill me.

Surely, they said, we will not kill you but we are going to surrender you to the Philistines so that we may have peace.

They bound him securely with new ropes and carried their mighty captive down.

But, on the way, the spirit of the Lord possessed him and he snapped the ropes as if they had been cobwebs and, picking up the jawbone of an ass that lay beside the road, he sallied forth in front of the astonished Hebrews, hud-

dling in dismay behind him, and, single-handed, slew a thousand Philistines.

The Philistines had had enough of trying to seize Samson. They withdrew to their own fastnesses and Samson became a judge over his people and ruled them twenty years. At the end of twenty years, Samson ventured into a Philistine city called Gaza and the men of the city, which had thick walls around it and great gates built to resist attacking foes, watched for hours that they might capture him. Midnight came and they fell asleep. In the morning they rubbed their eyes with astonishment, for the gates of Gaza were missing. Samson had simply lifted them like feathers, bolts and bars and massive stones, mere playthings in his grasp, carried them to the brow of a neighboring hill and left them standing there in plain sight.

But alas! Some time after this Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. She did not love him but she made believe that she did and, through her, Samson's marvelous strength was overcome.

The lords of the Philistines came to her

and said, Entice Samson and see wherein his great strength lieth and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give thee eleven hundred pieces of silver.

Then Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

And Samson replied to her, If they bind me with seven green twigs that were never dried then shall I be weak and be as another man.

Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green twigs which had not been dried and she bound him with them.

Now there were men concealed, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said so that they could hear, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the twigs as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies; now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.

And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were used, then shall I be weak and be as another man.

Delilah therefore took new ropes and bound him with them and said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were spies concealed in the chamber watching what should happen. But Samson broke the ropes that bound him as if they had been mere threads. Then Delilah was very angry and said, Hitherto thou hast mocked me and told me lies. Tell me now truly wherewith thou mightest be bound. Then Samson said to her, If thou wilt weave the seven locks of my head with the web, I will lose my great strength.

So she fastened his hair with the pin and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep and went away with the pin of the beam and with the web.

And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times and hast not told me wherein thy strength lieth.

And it came to pass, when she pressed him

daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart and said unto her: There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarene unto God since my birth; if I be shaven then my strength will go from me and I shall become weak and be like any other man.

And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up at once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her and brought money in their hand.

And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him and his strength went from him.

And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke from his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times before and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

Poor Samson! By God's order his hair

was never to be cut. When he disobeyed God and allowed his locks to be shorn his strength went away in a moment.

The Philistines carried him in triumph to Gaza. Its walls and gates could imprison him safely now. First they put out his eyes. Then they bound him with chains of brass. Then they made him grind corn in their dungeon.

Blind and bound and a slave, behold Samson, weaker than any, who was the other day so strong! The Lord had departed from him. Samson, poor fellow, had found this out too late. In his gloomy prison he began to think, perhaps to be sorry for his sins, perhaps to repent his foolish confidence in himself and to pray to God. His hair began to grow again and his strength to return.

One day the lords of the Philistines gathered themselves together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, for, they said, Our god hath delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hand.

The Philistines were beyond measure delighted, for now they thought they would see their god's revenge upon Samson. It came

to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. So they called Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport; and they set him between the pillars. They wished him to perform for their amusement.

And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women that beheld while Samson made sport.

And Samson called unto the Lord and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand and of the other with his left,

And Samson said, Let me die with the

Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead whom he slew at his death were more than they whom he slew in his life.

Thus Samson died and was buried. Though the strongest of men, he was in some ways the weakest, and his story has its moral for us.

We are to obey God in what we fancy little things. We are to choose good companions, not bad ones. If sin gets hold of us it will treat us as the Philistines treated Samson. First it will blind our eyes and we shall not see how horrid it is. Then it will bind us in fetters of evil habits and take our strength away. Then it will make us serve like slaves in its prison house.

XXXI

RUTH AND NAOMI

ONCE, when a famine was sore in the land of Israel, a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to stay awhile in the land of Moab.

He took with him his wife Naomi and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. His name was Elimelech.

In the land of Moab Elimelech died, and Naomi, widowed and sorrowful, tarried there with her two sons who had each found a wife among the daughters of Moab. The name of one was Orpah, the name of the other was Ruth.

Ten years passed by and Mahlon and Chilion both died. Naomi, longing for Bethlehem, decided to go back to her old home. She was lonely and homesick; her husband and her sons gone, she hated the land of the stranger.

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of

Moab; for she had heard that in the country of Moab the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.

Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you as ye have dealt with the dead and with me.

The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voices and wept.

Their home had been in the house with Naomi. At that time, as in Eastern lands to-day, when a son married he brought his wife home to live with his mother. These daughters of Moab thought it was very hard to let this old mother go back all alone to her own land. They could not bear to do it, but she insisted that they must.

Orpah at last kissed her mother-in-law and said farewell but Ruth clung to her and re-

fused to be separated from Naomi. Ruth must have loved Naomi very much. All this shows that Naomi had been kind and loving to her daughters-in-law.

When Orpah had gone Naomi said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law.

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God.

Where thou diest will I die and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

When Naomi saw that Ruth was steadfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking against it to her.

So they two went until they came to Bethlehem; and it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them and they said, Is this Naomi?

And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi,

call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

I went out full and the Lord hath brought me home again empty; why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

So Naomi returned to her own people and Ruth, the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, came with her from the country of Moab; and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest.

Though Naomi was at home again she was very, very poor and Ruth said to her, Let me now go to the field and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find favor.

And Naomi said to her, Go, my daughter.

Long years before, when Moses made laws for the Israelites, he had given this rule, and all devout land-owners observed it still:

When ye reap the harvest of your land, ye shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, neither shall ye gather the gleanings of your harvest. Thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the

poor and the stranger. I am the Lord thy God.

Ruth, the stranger from Moab, beautiful and modest, went therefore to the fields of Boaz and gleaned after the reapers, gathering into her apron the ears that they left.

Boaz, a man of great wealth, was of the kindred of Elimelech.

He came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, The Lord be with you, and they answered gravely, The Lord bless thee.

Glancing over the wide field, his eye fell on Ruth and he said,

Whose damsel is this?

And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:

And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves; so she came and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another

field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens;

Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap and go thou after them; have I not charged the young men that they shall not molest thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn.

Then she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother and the land of thy nativity and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

The Lord recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Then she said, Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and

RUTH THE GLEANER

for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers; and they reached her parched corn and she did eat and was sufficed and left.

And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves and reproach her not.

So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley.

And she took it up and went into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned; and she brought forth and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.

And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought and said,

The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz.

And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men until they have ended all my harvest.

And Naomi said unto Ruth, her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.

So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of the barley harvest and of the wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law.

This is one of the loveliest stories in the Bible. Ruth comforted her mother Naomi, and Boaz, who was of Naomi's own kinsfolk, watched the fair Ruth day by day. He saw her winsome grace, and her sweetness to Naomi pleased him and, having no wife, he decided to marry Ruth. Among the Jews

there was a custom when a man died that his nearest unmarried relative should marry the widow. This explains the rest of the story.

At the gate of the town of Bethlehem, court was held daily and, if land was bought or sold, the deeds were certified there.

Then went Boaz up to the gate and sat him down there; and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spoke came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down.

And Boaz took ten men of the elders of the city and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land which was our brother Elimelech's.

And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me that I may know; for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.

Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance; redeem thou my right to thyself: for I cannot redeem it.

Now this was the manner in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for, to confirm all things, a man plucked off his shoe and gave it to his neighbor; and this was a testimony in Israel.

Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut

off from among his brethren and from the gate of his place; ye are witnesses this day.

And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel; and do thou worthily in Ephratah and be famous in Bethlehem:

And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bore unto Judah, of the offspring which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.

So Boaz took Ruth and she was his wife and she bare a son.

And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman that his name may be famous in Israel.

And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him.

And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom and became nurse unto it.

And the women, her neighbors, gave it a

name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

So the fair Ruth, with her golden hair and her soft eyes, a daughter of Moab, became a mother and, in due time, when she was old, a grandmother. Her grandson was David, of whose royal line, in ages yet to be, the little Child of Heaven should be born in Bethlehem.

XXXII

THE CHILD SAMUEL

YEAR by year the people of Israel kept the great feasts of the Lord, and those who could do so went away from their own homes to worship at the temple in Shiloh. In this temple there was an old priest named Eli. He had served God many years and was a good man.

One day, after the morning sacrifice was over, Eli noticed a woman kneeling before the altar. She seemed in great trouble and sobbed and cried bitterly as she called on the Lord in prayer. Eli thought she had been drinking wine and he reproved her, saying that she was behaving foolishly. How long wilt thou be drunken? he said; put away thy wine from thee.

I think there was some excuse for Eli's mistake in the fact that he was an old man who could not see so keenly as when he was young. It must have hurt the poor woman very much to be accused of so shameful a sin as intoxica-

tion, and if she had made him an angry answer no one could have been surprised. But she was too anxious to be cross or fretful though unjustly accused.

No, my lord, she said, patiently. I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink but have poured out my soul before the Lord.

Count not thine handmaid as a daughter of Belial, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

Then Eli answered, Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

Very much comforted by these kind words the woman arose and went on her way.

The woman was Hannah, the wife of a man named Elkanah, a rich farmer and sheep owner of Mount Ephraim. She had everything on earth she wanted except one thing. Her husband loved her and did all he could to make her happy, but she had no child and she was always wishing for one. Her heart was like an empty nest. In the night she would wake up and reach out her hand, trying to

touch the little head she had been dreaming about. Year after year she went with Elkanah to the temple and prayed the good God to give her a little son.

When another year came around Elkanah went to Shiloh alone, for Hannah's prayer had been heard and she had to stay at home and nurse the most beautiful babe that ever mother had. She named him Samuel, which means Asked of God.

Before this baby's birth, when Hannah had knelt in the temple, she had made a vow or sacred promise to JEHOVAH that, if He answered her request, she would give the child to the Lord all the days of his life.

So when Elkanah went up by himself she said, I am sorry, but I must now stay at home until my little child is weaned; then I will bring him that he may appear before the Lord and there abide forever.

The good Elkanah agreed to this, for, though he, too, loved Samuel dearly, he would not keep him back when his mother had devoted him to God's service. When the little one was weaned, which was after his third

birthday, the father and mother went together to the temple. Little Samuel went with them. By this time he could walk and talk, of course, and he knew already that he was a little child of God and somehow different from all other children.

The parents brought a present with them, and in their train were three white bullocks for a sacrifice.

Hannah went proudly up to Eli, leading her beautiful boy.

Oh, my lord, she said, I am the woman who stood by thee here, praying to the Lord. Dost thou not remember? And she went on to tell him all about it lest it had slipped from his mind.

For this child I prayed, she said, and the Lord heard and gave me my petition, therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.

I like the word she used, lent. She felt that the Lord knew just what it meant for a mother to part with her only son, and that son a mere baby. Very likely she stayed at Shiloh for awhile and cared for the boy, at least until he

was a little older, but Samuel did not return to Mount Ephraim. Elkanah went back alone. Hannah, too, left Samuel in due time and had other children whom she loved. But every twelvemonth, when she came with her husband to the temple, she brought Samuel a little coat that she had made for him with her own hands.

As for little Samuel, he lived with the good old priest and wore a priest's white linen robe and, though a child, did many little services for the Lord in the temple. Eli had become very frail and feeble and he was broken hearted because his own two sons, Hophni and Phineas, instead of being good, were as bad as bad could be. They robbed the people who brought offerings and they even dared to rob God. They were wicked men though their father was a saint. Samuel, with his sweet temper and swift obedience and gentle ways, was very dear to the old man. Samuel tried to do whatever Eli told him. He did not say, In a minute, or, Wait a little please, or, I can't, it's too hard; but when Eli spoke, Samuel hastened to obey.

And thus it came to pass that for Samuel the words came true that our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ spoke, thousands of years after, in that same land of Judea,

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

A most wonderful thing happened to Samuel.

He was only a child, but he was wise beyond his years, and daily he ministered to the Lord before Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was very precious. People had so wandered away from the Lord that they did not often see His face or hear His voice. Of old He often talked with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but now He hid His face and men did not feel so near Him as their fathers did.

One night all was dark and still in the temple. The lamp in the little shrine where the ark stood behind curtains had gone out: a lamp that should have burned both night and day.

But Eli was old and his eyes were dim. Hophni and Phineas neglected their duties. Little Samuel lay down to sleep on his bed before the lamp went out.

He was falling asleep as a child does, quickly and soundly, when somebody called him, not very loudly, but he heard his name.

Samuel!

Here am I, he answered, springing up and running to Eli, for he thought the old man had called him.

Lie down again, my son, said Eli. I did not call thee.

Again came the call, clear, penetrating. Samuel, Samuel! The boy ran to Eli, exclaiming, Here am I. Thou didst call me. He could not imagine how it was, or why, but he was sure it was Eli who summoned him. Not yet did Samuel know that sometimes God calls people by their names, not yet had God whispered to him, Samuel I have called thee by thy name. Thou art mine. But Eli knew. Old Eli, who would so gladly have heard God's call to him, whose heart felt a strange pang, whose dim eyes were wistful, as he said,

I did not call thee, dear child. If the call come again, say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

So Samuel went and lay down. And the

third time the voice spoke, this time with an accent of command, that even the child felt, Samuel, Samuel!

Speak, for thy servant heareth, said the boy.

Then the Lord spoke to him. Many things God tells children that He reveals to no one else. Children are always a little nearer heaven than older people are. But the things God told Samuel were so sorrowful, so deep and mysterious, that the boy was never the same, never so much a child after that.

For it was revealed to him that the wicked sons of Eli should soon meet a violent death, that Eli himself should die suddenly and that, worst of all, the ark of God would be taken away by the Philistines. The ark of God was the most sacred treasure of the Hebrews and, after it was taken, Eli did not want to live. In his misery and blindness, he stumbled and fell, and was killed instantly. A child who was born on that awful day was named by his mother, Ichabod, which means, The glory is departed, for the ark of God is taken.

As for Samuel, he grew more and more in wisdom, and ruled his people many years.

XXXIII

THE RETURN OF THE ARK

THE Philistines were triumphant when they found that they had captured the ark of God. They carried it at once to the temple of their idol god, Dagon, and their priests set it before Dagon in pride as a trophy.

Their boastfulness was not to last long. The first morning after the ark had been left in the house of Dagon, when the priests entered, bowing low to the earth, there was Dagon tumbled down from his pedestal and lying helpless on the floor. Dagon was only an image carved out of wood. How could he help himself? The priests lifted him up and set him back in his place.

Next morning, when they opened the door of Dagon's house, there lay the poor idol, this time a perfect wreck. His head was cut off. He lay in a ruinous heap in his desolate house, which no man ever entered again.

But this was not enough. Ashdod, to which place the ark of God was brought, was laid waste with a fearful plague and the Philistines, in the midst of their ravages and their forays, stopped and began to think.

The ark of the God of Israel, said their wise men, shall not abide with us. The God of Israel has stretched out His hand against us and against Dagon our god.

They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried away unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel thither.

And it was so that, after they had carried it to Gath, the hand of the Lord was against the city with a very great destruction; and He smote the men of the city, both small and great.

Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought hither the ark

of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel and let it go again to its own place, that it slay not us and our people; for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was heavy there. And the cry of the city went up to heaven.

For seven long months the ark of God tarried in the land of the Philistines. Then, in despair, the Philistines sent it home. They sent it home with gifts of gold and silver, hoping to avert the wrath of the God whom they did not worship.

They said, We will send the ark home in a cart drawn by two cows, that have little calves at home. If these cows go directly to Beth-shemesh, where the Hebrews are, we shall then be sure that it is their God who has smitten us. If the ark wavers and turns aside, if the two cows turn and go back to their young, we shall know that the Hebrews' God had nothing to do with our trouble.

They watched. The cart went straight on the high road to Beth-shemesh. It turned neither to the right nor to the left.

The men of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat in the valley. When they looked up and saw the ark coming home they rejoiced with shouting and offered sacrifices. But they violated the sanctity of the ark by peeping in it and by touching the gold and silver of the Philistines. A great many of them died in consequence and so the Beth-shemesh people were afraid to be near the ark. They sent to the men of Kirjath-jearim, begging them to come and take it away. You see the Hebrews were not in earnest in their worship of God. They had become polluted by the heathen and some of them followed the pagan rites of the Philistines. It was just that they should be punished as the Philistines were, for they were really much more to blame than they. Every Hebrew knew better than to touch the ark.

It was Samuel who gathered the people together, and told them to repent of their sins and return to their old love and reverence. He prayed with them and for them. They burned

up their false gods and started anew in the worship of God.

Then, when again they had a battle with their enemies the Lord fought on their side and the Philistines were discomfited.

The people of Israel had, until this point in their history, been ruled by judges who were told what to do or to leave undone by God himself.

But now they wanted to have a king and they began to ask for one. They were not satisfied with Samuel, and they were discontented with his sons, who, like Eli's sons in other days, were corrupt and dishonest. Good fathers do not always have good sons.

Behold thou art old, said the people. We do not trust thy sons. Let us have a king as other nations have.

XXXIV

THE FIRST KING

THERE was a good deal of discussion, and Samuel explained that kings were not the easiest people to get on with, that they needed a great many servants and were apt, in one and another way, to cost a good deal of money. But the men of Israel were set on their own way. A king they wanted and the Lord told Samuel that he must find them a king.

In the land of the tribe of Benjamin there was then living a man named Kish, a mighty man of power, and he had a son named Saul. This youth was very tall, taller by head and shoulders than anybody else in Israel, and a goodly person, handsome and attractive.

It happened that the asses of Kish had strayed away. They were valuable property and Kish sent his son Saul to look for them. Saul, with a servant, tramped up hill and down dale, and days passed, but they could not find the lost beasts. They went from

place to place, inquiring, and seeking, but no word did they hear of the asses.

Finally Saul said to the servant, Let us go back, lest my father be anxious. He will leave off worrying about the asses and think we are lost.

The servant said, In this city that is near us there lives a man of God. Let us go and ask his advice. He will know what we would better do.

But, said Saul, How are we to go to a man of God? We have nothing to give him, no present; we even have no bread left. What shall we do?

I have a little money left, the servant said; we will offer him that.

In those days money was heavy and was weighed in scales. It was part of a servant's burden. Not as now was it carried by the owner of it, if any one else could relieve him.

Well said, replied Saul. We will go to the seer.

And as they went up the hill to the city they met young maidens going out to draw water and said unto them, Is the seer here?

And they answered him and said, He is; behold, he is before you; make haste now for he came to-day to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people to-day in the high place.

As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat; for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat who are bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him.

And they went up into the city; and when they were come there, behold, Samuel met them as he went up to the high place.

Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,

To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I told thee of! this man shall reign over my people.

Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is.

And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for thou shalt eat with me to-day, and to-morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart.

And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the guest-room, and made them sit in the chief place among them that were bidden, who were about thirty persons.

And Samuel said to the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said, Set it by thee.

And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set it before thee, and eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.

And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us (and he passed on), but stand thou still awhile, that I may show thee the word of God.

Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

When thou art departed from me to-day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and taken thought for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?

Then shalt thou go forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the oak of Tabor, and there shall meet thee there three men going up to God to Beth-el, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine:

And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands.

After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a timbrel, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall be prophesying.

And the Spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee.

And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come unto thee, and show thee what thou shalt do.

And it was so, that, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a band of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, and he prophesied among them.

And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied with the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto

the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?

And one of the same place answered and said, And who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets?

And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place.

And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And they said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were not found, we came to Samuel.

And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you.

And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But concerning the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spoke, he told him not.

And Samuel called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh;

And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the

hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you:

And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your calamities and your distresses, and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands.

So Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken. And he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by their families, and the family of the Matrites was taken: and Saul the son of Kish was taken; but when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they asked of the Lord further, is there yet a man to come hither? And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff.

And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all

the people shouted and said, God save the king.

Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

XXXV

THE WARS OF SAUL

SAUL had no sooner been anointed king than he found himself obliged to go into battle. It was quite wonderful that a young man who had been living quietly at home with his father should have known how to lead his people against the warlike Amalekites, Moabites and Philistines, who were always swarming against the Hebrews. At this time the Hebrews were so occupied with the care of sheep and cattle that they had lost the knowledge of many of the useful arts. For instance, there was no smith in the land of Israel and, when they wanted to sharpen a sword or fashion a spear, or even repair an axe or a plough, they were obliged to go over and ask favors of their enemies the Philistines. The Philistines took good care that the Hebrews should be dependent upon them. They had got into the habit of conquering the Hebrews and they did not expect any change.

But Saul at once blew a trumpet and, with his brave son Jonathan, took the field. In the very first battle, with three thousand men, Saul overcame a host of Philistines arrayed against him, with thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen and people as numerous as the sand on the seashore. He succeeded equally in several battles and Jonathan, his son, on one occasion, attacked a garrison in a stronghold with nobody to help him except the young man who carried his armor. Jonathan and the armor-bearer overcame the garrison, pursued their fleeing foes, and then mingled in a battle that had begun while they were absent, and helped to bring salvation to the people. Saul fought against his enemies on every side and, wherever he turned, he was successful until he began to be proud and haughty and to think that he knew better than the Lord. When he did this, the Lord departed from him, and Samuel who had been his friend all along, came and told him that God had determined to take the kingdom from him and to put in his place another whom He had chosen and whom Samuel described as a

man after God's own heart. This was a great trouble to Saul. He brooded over it night and day. Although he had a loving wife and many children, although Jonathan his son was of princely character, yet Saul was unhappy, so unhappy that it seemed as if an evil spirit had taken possession of him. He sat in his palace with sadness in his face, and nobody dared approach him.

Samuel, who loved him dearly, stopped coming to see him, and this greatly grieved Saul. He could not forget the last words Samuel said to him.

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in those who obey the commands of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king.

Samuel was now very old. He sat in his house in Ramah and mourned for Saul until one day the Lord said to him, Stop grieving

and mourning for Saul. Fill thine horn with oil and go. I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided me a king among his sons.

You must think of Samuel as an old, old man, with white hair and snowy beard, a mantle wrapped about him and a staff in his hand. Over the hills and vales he took his journey until he came to Bethlehem where he entered the house of Jesse. He said to Jesse that he had come on purpose to offer a sacrifice with him. And Jesse called his household together, seven tall sons, who passed before Samuel, one by one. The first was Eliab, the eldest, who was so strong and beautiful that Samuel said in his heart, Surely this is the one the Lord means to choose. But the Lord said, No, this is not the one I have chosen. Do not look on his countenance nor on his stature. The Lord seeth not as man seeth. For man looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh on the heart.

In those days a father set great store by his eldest son. It was a great disappointment to Jesse that the prophet paid so little attention

to Eliab. But he called Abinadab his second son and made him pass before Samuel. Samuel shook his head. Neither hath the Lord chosen this, he said. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. Samuel said, again shaking his head, Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

In turn Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. It was just the same in every case; not one of them was the choice of the Lord. Samuel turned to Jesse and said, Are all thy children here?

No, said Jesse, there is still one, the youngest, a mere lad. He is out in the field with the sheep. You surely would not care for him.

But Samuel answered, Send and fetch him. We will not sit down until he is here.

Somebody went in a great hurry and said to the boy who was out herding the sheep, the boy whom nobody had much considered up to this moment, Make haste and come home. There is a prophet up at the house and he refuses to sit down at the table until you are there. We cannot imagine what he wants of you, but he is not to be moved by persuasion

and your father wishes you to lose not a moment, but come as fast as you can.

So, breathless and eager, the boy came running in. He was all in a glow, with cheeks like the rose, a beautiful pure face, brave and fearless. He looked straight at Samuel as he stood in the doorway, and Samuel thought that he had never seen any one who was finer and nobler. He was good to look at, and the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David in the midst of his brethren, and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day. None of them fully understood what this anointing meant, but the household went on just as usual and David just as usual took care of the sheep in the fields.

As he herded the sheep, he often played sweet strains upon his harp. One day messengers came again to the house in Bethlehem and said, Our master the king, even Saul, is melancholy and sore distressed by an evil spirit that has come upon him. We have heard that you have a son who can play the harp, and we want him to go back with us and

cheer the poor king. So David left the sheep, took his harp, and went to the court of King Saul. You must note that David was ready at a moment's notice.

When he stood before Saul, Saul loved him greatly and made him his armor-bearer. As often as the unhappy mood came back to the king, David played on his harp and drove the evil spirit away.

He stayed with Saul until Saul grew strong and well and was ready once more to fight with his old foes, the Philistines.

Then David returned to Bethlehem and, as before, took care of the sheep.

I think some of you will like to read in this place, part of a great poem, written by Robert Browning, which tells you what sort of tunes the youthful David played on his harp for King Saul. The king was sitting moping in his tent, all in the dark, and the shepherd boy ran up and saw him looking as black as a thunder-cloud and paying no attention to any one. Boldly he tuned his harp, and first he played with the skillful touch of a true artist, in long, melting chords,

The tune all our sheep know, as one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us—so blue and so far!

Then the tune, for which quails on the corn-land will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

Some day when you are older, you may enjoy reading this poem as a whole.

XXXVI

DAVID AND GOLIATH

DAVID returned to Bethlehem to keep his father's sheep and three of his brothers went to fight in Saul's army. The Philistines had set their battle in array on a mountain side. The Israelites were drawn up in battle line on the other side, also on a mountain, and between the two armies there was a valley. But, though they faced each other in grim earnest, days passed without the striking of a blow. Sometimes battles were lost and won in single combat; a brave champion would step out from one side, hurl a defiant challenge to the other, and wait for some one to come and fight with him. It happened in this way now. A champion named Goliath of Gath sallied forth from the camp of the Philistines, a mighty giant who towered above ordinary men and who was clothed in armor from head to foot. He was great and strong. He had a helmet of brass upon his head and he

wore a coat of mail. In his hand he waved a mighty spear, his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron, but he tossed it about like a feather. This giant cried with a terrible voice to the armies of Israel, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine and ye servants of Saul? Choose you a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me and to kill me, then will we be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then shall ye be our servants and serve us.

And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together.

Saul must have lost most of his old courage. You remember that the Lord had departed from him. He was very much afraid of the Philistine and the whole camp shared his fear. They listened to the arrogant champion with quaking hearts. The Philistine came out every morning and every evening for forty days, saying the same thing, and not a man so much as dared to answer his challenge.

About this time Jesse, at home in Bethle-

hem, bethought himself about his sons who were in the field and concluded to send David with a present to them.

He said, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn and these ten loaves and run to the camp to thy brethren, and carry these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare and take their pledge. An ephah was a little over three pecks, as the Hebrews measured wheat and corn.

David rose up early in the morning, left the sheep with the keeper and, as his father had commanded him, went to the place where the host was going forth to the fight.

Army against army they stood, angry and menacing, with their battalions in array; but, though there was much shouting and now and then perhaps a foray, there was no real fight. David left the things he had brought with the proper person, ran into the army, found his brothers and saluted them. While he was talking with them, up came the Philistine, thundering out his defiant challenge. To David's surprise the men around him huddled

together in fright and some of them ran into their tents. David could not understand it. His eyes flashed. He threw back his shoulders, held up his head and his lips were sternly set.

What is the meaning of this? he said,

Ah, said the men around him, that great giant is so strong that we have nobody who dares to tackle him. If anybody could fight with him and kill him, the king would enrich him with great riches and make his father's house free in Israel, and give him one of the princesses to be his wife.

David did not care much for these brilliant promises. His heart was filled with anger that a reproach had fallen upon Israel in that an uncircumcised Philistine should dare defy the armies of the living God. He went from one to another speaking words of hot anger. Eliab, his oldest brother, was very much annoyed. His anger was kindled against David, and he said, scornfully, Why did you come here? With whom did you leave the few sheep in the wilderness? You have come down to look at the battle. I know

your pride and the folly of your heart and you would better go home again.

David held his head high. He could not stop to think of Eliab's disdain at this crisis. He spoke to one and another and finally his brave words were repeated in the ear of Saul and Saul sent for him. The king did not know that this was the youth who had played the harp for him in the days of his illness. He thought it was a stranger.

And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him. Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for thou art but a youth and he has been a man of war from his youth.

And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep and there came a lion and again a bear and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went after him and smote him and delivered it out of his mouth. And when he arose against me I caught him by his beard and smote him and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircum-

cised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

David said, Moreover, the Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.

And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.

Then Saul armed David with his own armor, put a helmet of brass on his head, and clothed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his side and started to meet the Philistine. But the armor was too heavy for him and he laid it off.

It is never well to fight a battle in anybody's armor but your own. David was wise in finding this out.

He took in his hand his shepherd's staff, and he chose five smooth stones out of the brook and put them in a shepherd's bag which he carried, and his sling was in his hand as he drew near to the Philistine.

There they stand, the mighty giant in shining armor and the slender boy with the shepherd's staff and the sling.

The Philistine looking about saw David and scorned him. He laughed loud and disdainfully and the Israelites heard him. Am I a dog, he said, that thou comest to me with a staff? And he cursed David by his gods.

Come to me, he shouted, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field.

But David had his answer ready. Boldly and clearly his words rang out far over the field till both armies heard them. Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied. This day shall the Lord deliver thee into mine hand, and I will smite thee and take thine head from thee. And I will give the bodies of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's and he shall give you into our hands.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

The Philistine, hearing this defiance, came striding forward in fierce anger and the ground seemed to shake beneath his tread. David ran fearlessly forward to meet him. Swiftly David put his hand into his bag, drew out a stone and cast it from his sling. It struck the Philistine in his forehead, in the one place that the helmet did not protect. The stone sank into his forehead and down he fell headlong, his mighty bulk prone upon the earth.

So David prevailed over the Philistine and smote the Philistine and slew him, but there was no sword in the hands of David. He ran, stood upon the Philistine and, with the giant's own sword, he cut off the giant's head.

When Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said to Abner the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth?

Abner said, O king, I cannot tell.

As David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner led him in to the presence of Saul.

And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou?

David answered, I am the son of thy servant, Jesse the Bethlehemite.

From this time David remained with Saul, and there grew up a strong friendship between David and Jonathan, Saul's son.

In future days David became one of the greatest kings, and one of the mightiest captains who have ever lived upon the earth. But he had a great deal to go through before he really sat upon the throne. The Hebrew women came out from all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul when the men returned victorious after the slaughter of the Philistine. They answered one another as they played on their timbrels, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

This made Saul very angry and he eyed David with fierce jealousy from that day onward. Several times he tried to kill him, so that David avoided his presence and, although he was soon married to Saul's daughter, he did not go near the palace when he could help himself.

Saul saw that his daughter loved her husband and he knew that Jonathan was David's friend. This made him the more angry. On

one occasion he sent messengers to David's house to entice him away, meaning to assassinate him, but Michal, David's wife, let her husband down through a window and he escaped through the fields and fled. This was not because David was afraid of Saul, but he did not wish to lift up his hand against the king. His wife took an image, laid it in the bed and covered it with a quilt. When Saul's messengers came, they forced their way into the house that they might take David away. But they found only the image. David meanwhile went away to Samuel, the old prophet who had poured the anointing oil on his head, and for awhile he lived at Ramah with Samuel.

XXXVII

A FOREST CHIEFTAIN

THE soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David. While David was doing what he could to keep out of Saul's way, Jonathan was on the watch against any plots of Saul. The noble fellow could not believe that his father's enmity was so great. When David said to him, What have I done, what is mine iniquity, and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeks my life? Jonathan said, I am sure there is some mistake. God forbid. Thou shalt not die. Behold, my father will do nothing great or small without telling me. Why should he hide such a thing from me? It is not so.

But David was keener and had more insight into character than Jonathan had. He said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes. He says, Let not Jonathan know this lest he be grieved, but

truly, as the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.

When Jonathan heard this he watched more carefully than ever, and before many days he was convinced that David must fly for his life. The two friends met in a lonely place, kissed and embraced each other, and exchanged a solemn vow of lifelong friendship. Then they separated. David and the young men who were with him found refuge in the woods and in caves of the mountains. For awhile David was sheltered by Achish, a king of the Philistines. Achish would have been the last one to give an asylum to the man who had killed Goliath, but David pretended to be insane, and the Philistines did not dare to interfere with a man whose wits were wandering as they thought such people were under the care of their gods.

As soon as David thought it was safe, he left the Philistines' camp and made his headquarters in the cave of Adullam. Here he was joined by all his brothers and nephews and the men of his father's house, a strong warlike band of valiant men. A good many others,

every one who was in distress, every one who was in debt, every one who was discontented, gathered themselves to him; and before long he was the forest chief and commander of a company of four hundred desperate and determined men. He was like Robin Hood, an outlaw in the woods.

You need not suppose that Saul was pleased when he heard this. It gave him a great deal of anxiety. He was not even placated when David and his band made a dash and delivered a stronghold called Keilah from the Philistines. Saul continued to plot against David's life. It was borne in on his mind that David should be his successor on the throne and the thought of it made him frantic with rage. Jonathan, who but for David would have been the heir to the throne, remained loyal to his friend. Again and again he sought David out in the dens and caves of the wood and comforted him and brought him help.

It came to pass at last that Saul took an army of three thousand picked soldiers and went in pursuit of David and his men among

the rocks of the wild goats. It was a sort of game of hide and seek, for the outlaws knew all the hiding places of the hills and were at home there and could secrete themselves behind bushes and trees and in wild ravines and laugh when Saul and his army came heavily lumbering by. Weary and worn Saul lay down to sleep in a cave. He had walked literally into the open mouth of the lion, for David and his men were at the very time hidden in the sides of the cave. A meaner man than David would have killed his enemy as he lay asleep, but he did not allow one of his men to touch Saul and he himself did nothing except cut off the skirt of Saul's robe. When Saul had gone out of the cave and was at a little distance, he heard a cry, My lord the king! Looking back, he saw David bending with his face to the earth. David said, How easily could I have killed thee this day, as some bade me. The Lord had delivered thee into mine hand in the cave, but, I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord for he is the Lord's anointed. Moreover, my father, see the skirt of thy robe in mine hand. In that I cut

this off and killed thee not, know thou that I have not sinned against thee, yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The Lord judge between me and thee.

At this Saul's conscience was moved and he said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept and he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

And now behold I know well that thou shalt surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. Swear now therefore unto me by the Lord that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house nor cut off my children after me. And David swore. Nevertheless, with his men, he retired to a stronghold in the rocks.

About this time Samuel, the prophet, died and there was great lamentation for him in Israel. Less than ever did David after this put faith in the promises of Saul.

There happened to be, in the neighborhood where David and his followers were hiding, a man of Mount Carmel who was very rich.

He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. This man's name was Nabal. He was a churl of morose and sordid disposition, a man whom it was very hard for any one to live with. Fortunately for himself he had a good and beautiful wife whose name was Abigail. At the time of the sheep shearing, which was a festival, David sent ten of his young men saying, Go up to Mount Carmel and greet Nabal in my name. And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be to thee and peace to thine house and peace unto all thou hast. I have heard that thou hast shearers. Now thy shepherds have been with us, and we have hurt them not. Not a lamb nor a sheep has been missing from thy flocks while thy shepherds were in Carmel. Wherefore, as we come in a good way, give I pray thee some present to thy servant and to thy son David.

Very courteously the young men made this request, but Nabal answered with rude insults and a frowning brow. Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away, every man

from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men whom I do not know and whom I despise?

Furious with anger, David's young men hurried back to him. They told him Nabal's words just as he had spoken them. David said, Gird ye on every man his sword, and immediately four hundred men ready to obey David's bidding sallied forth. They meant to exterminate Nabal and his people and take all the spoil they wanted. But some of Nabal's servants made haste to Abigail, the lady of the manor, and told her all about it. They said, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master. And he railed on them. But the men were very good unto us and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything as long as we were near them in the fields. They were a wall unto us by night and day. They protected us from the wild beasts and the Philistines while we were keeping the sheep. Now, therefore, consider what thou wilt do, for evil is determined against our master and against all this household, for he

is such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him.

Storming over the fields and out of the forests, their swords at their sides and wrath in their hearts, David and his band of outlaws came marching on hot foot; but they halted, for around a corner of a hill came a gracious lady riding upon an ass and with her a long train of people carrying provisions. For Abigail made haste without consulting Nabal and took with her two hundred loaves and two great leathern bottles of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched corn, a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs and laid them on asses. Not one word to Nabal, as I said, for he would have surely stopped this lavish proffer of goods and food.

As soon as Abigail saw David she alighted from her ass and bowed herself to the ground before David. She entreated him with the most gentle and winning words she could speak. She said, If only I had seen the young men who were so rudely treated by Nabal there would have been no such answer sent. And now this blessing which thine handmaiden

hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. I pray thee forgive the trespass of thine handmaid, for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, because thou fightest the battles of the Lord and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.

David listened to Abigail and all his anger melted away. He accepted her presents and said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou who hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

You may get an idea of the churlishness and folly of Nabal when I tell you that, as soon as he heard of this interview with David, his heart failed within him and he became very ill. In a short time he died out of pure chagrin. He could not bear to part with his possessions.

A little while after this, Saul again took the field against David and again David had a good opportunity to kill him. Indeed, David's nephew Abishai urged David to make an end

of the long warfare when, once more, they found Saul asleep on the ground with his spear stuck into the earth at his head, and all his people sleeping about him. But David refused. Again he said, The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed.

But he took a spear and a jar of water from beside Saul's pillow, and carried them away, and no man knew it, for a deep sleep had fallen on them all.

Then David went over to the other side and stood on the top of a hill afar off, a great space being between them.

And David cried to the people and to Abner, the son of Ner, saying, in effect, Why do you valiant people take so little care of your master? You ought to be put to death yourselves for your neglect.

I could easily have killed him, but I have spared his life again.

For a moment Saul was sorry, and owned that he had played the fool. But he soon forgot it and hated David as much as ever.

The outlaw life of David did not end until

after the death of Saul, who fell by his own hand after a hard fought battle with the Philistines. Three of his sons, one of them the princely Jonathan, also fell down slain in Mount Gilboa. When the battle went against them and Saul was sorely wounded he drew his sword and fell upon it.

Word was brought to David, and David, so far from rejoicing when he received the crown and the bracelets of his enemy, took hold of his own clothing, rent it, mourned and wept. He made a beautiful lamentation for Saul and Jonathan. Not only was David a musician and a warrior, but he was a great poet, and wrote many of the Psalms which to this day we sing in our churches. In his poem about Saul and Jonathan he said, The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places. How are the mighty fallen? Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ascalon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death they were not

divided. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan. Very pleasant hast thou been unto me. Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

With the death of Saul, David's outlaw life was ended. He became the unquestioned king of Israel. He was thirty years old when he began to reign and his reign continued forty years. Seven years his capital was in Hebron, thirty-three years Jerusalem was his chief city. During all his reign, which grew more and more splendid to the very end, he was always fighting his enemies, and he had some trials in his own family. His favorite son, Absalom, led a rebellion against him. This was the darkest hour of David's life. Absalom was tall and beautiful and had splendid hair. Riding through the woods after his defeat in battle Absalom was caught by his hair in the thick boughs of an oak and so hung between heaven and earth. Joab, the captain of David's hosts, killed him there. Men running swiftly brought the tidings to the king.

The king was much moved and went up to the chamber over the gate weeping bitterly. As he went, he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom. Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son.

David did not die until he was a very old man. He saw his kingdom at peace. He had gathered gold and silver for the temple of God which his son was to build and, after his long life, he fell asleep and was buried with his fathers. Solomon his son reigned in his stead.

XXXVIII

THE WISE CHOICE

KING DAVID had many sons. The one chosen to be his successor was not the eldest, nor the most ambitious. Solomon was one of David's younger sons. God made known to David that He had chosen Solomon to sit upon the throne and carry on the kingdom. This was a great responsibility to be laid on one who was little more than a boy, and who had up to this time been busy with his studies and his own amusements. One night, when Solomon was asleep, he had a dream in which the Lord appeared to him saying, Ask what I shall give thee.

There were a great many things for which Solomon might have asked, such as great riches or fame or the life of his enemies or a long life for himself, but instead he asked that God would give him wisdom and knowledge so that he might be a good king, rule his people well and carry out the wishes of David his

father. God was very much pleased with this request and He gave Solomon so much of His own wisdom that no man on the earth could compare with him. Indeed ever since he has been called the wisest of men.

In the Book of Proverbs which Solomon wrote we find a great many wise sayings which condense in a few words the substance of whole sermons.

Here are some of them:

Evil communications corrupt good manners.

A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.

A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance.

Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith.

Better is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.

The rich and the poor meet together. The Lord is the maker of them all.

In the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs there is a description of a good and loving woman which is so beautiful that in all ages

it has suited every true woman, and is a sort of portrait of the mother wherever she is found.

Solomon wrote also the Book of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. When he had been on the throne only a few days, two women came into his presence each declaring that the baby that one of them carried was hers. There was therefore a hard problem for Solomon to solve. One was a real mother and the other a false one, and each clamored that the baby was her own. The child of one had died in the night. The king ordered a man to bring a sword and said, Cut this child in two, give half to one and half to the other woman. The real mother threw out her hands in pity and cried: O no! no! no! Do not kill the baby! Let this woman have him. But the false mother smiled and said, That will do very well. Cut the baby in two.

Solomon gave the child unhurt into the arms of the mother who loved it. It was easy for him to decide when he saw the love in one face and the cruelty in the other.

For many years David had longed to build

a temple to the Most High God. He had never been able to do it because he had so many wars to trouble him, and his enemies were always swarming over the border. Besides, the Lord did not wish David to undertake this work. It was to be left for Solomon, whose kingdom was at peace.

Solomon sent to Hiram, King of Tyre, and made an alliance with him, so that cedar trees and fir trees were to be hewn on Mount Lebanon and sent from there on rafts by sea to the coast of Judea. Thence they were transported to Jerusalem. Thousands and thousands of men were employed in building the magnificent temple, which when finished was one of the wonders of the world. From a distance as it crowned the mountain top, it glittered as if made of gold and snow. The treasure that David had saved was lavished upon it, and it was the fit expression of the love of God's people for God.

Solomon built splendid palaces for himself. All this building of the temple and of the palaces occupied many years. In the palace where Solomon lived there was the utmost

luxury. The king's plates and drinking cups were of solid gold. In a house built of the cedars of Lebanon, the king allowed nothing to be of silver, and indeed silver was not much thought of in his days. He had a navy at sea and an army on land.

A great queen came from a long distance to pay him a visit. In her own land of Sheba she had heard of the glory of the king who reigned in Jerusalem, and she thought the reports could not be true. One day as the king sat by a palace window, he saw coming up the mountain side a long train of camels, and amid them one on which was a litter richly curtained. In this the lady rode, and the other camels bore beautiful presents which she had brought for the monarch whom she came to see; spices and gold and precious stones. She asked Solomon a great many questions and found that he could answer them all. When she saw how wise he was, how beautiful was his home, and how great the number of his attendants, and the ivory stairway by which he went up into the house of the Lord, she had no words to tell what she thought. She gave the king the gold

of Sheba and the fragrant spices and the shining precious stones, saying, The half of thy greatness and thy wisdom was not told me. Happy are thy men and happy are they who stand continually before thee.

King Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba in return for her gifts all that she desired and whatever she asked. So she turned and went away to her own land, she and her servants.

Solomon reigned forty years in Jerusalem, sitting on a great throne of ivory covered with plates of pure gold. There were six steps leading to the throne and twelve lions made of gleaming gold stood on guard, six on one side and six on the other, on these steps. The youth who chose wisdom had not only received that, but every other gift that God could give him: wealth and honor and great renown and long life. He reigned over Israel as one who was the representative of JEHOVAH, and all the kings of the earth sought his presence and most of them paid him tribute. At last in a good old age he passed away. The Bible says that Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father.

He was succeeded by Rehoboam, his son, who was a weak character and only a counterfeit king. Rehoboam oppressed the people and departed from the Lord. In his days the people forgot the pure worship of God and began to worship idols. The result was that they had rebellion within the kingdom and that enemies came against the Israelites from without. The Egyptians carried off the golden shields from the temple and robbed the king's house of its beautiful cups and plates, and Rehoboam, instead of fighting for them and getting them back, made shields of brass and put them in the temple to take the place of the golden shields. No wonder that in his day the kingdom was divided. It was rent in two parts, and from that time peace and prosperity were never restored as they had been in the days of Solomon.

XXXIX

THE STORY OF ELIJAH

STRAIGHT into the palace of King Ahab, over the marble pavements and into the presence chamber, strode Elijah the Tishbite, a man who had dwelt in the desert and communed with God. He came with a message. As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain in three years, but according to my word. As suddenly as he had come, he disappeared, just as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up. But a great famine fell upon the land. Not a drop of rain fell for the space of three years. The grass was all burnt up, the brooks dried, the beds of the foaming torrents were parched and dusty and food failed for both man and beast.

Elijah hid himself for awhile by the brook Cherith until the last drop of it dried away, and the ravens brought him bread and flesh in

the morning and bread and flesh in the evening. After the brook was dry he went to a little city called Zarepheth. When he came to the gate of the city a poor woman was there gathering sticks. He called to her and said, Fetch me I pray thee a little water in a vessel that I may drink. And bring me, too, I pray thee, a morsel of bread.

The woman, who was a widow, said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a crumb. I have only a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruse and I am gathering these bits of sticks that I may make a little cake for my son and me; after that is gone we must die.

The strange man said a very strange thing. Go and make the little cake, he said, but bring it first to me. And afterward make something for thee and thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain on the earth.

The woman had great faith. She did as the prophet said and, all the time the famine lasted, there was enough meal in the barrel

and enough oil in the cruse to feed her and her boy.

A still greater reward came to her, for her child fell sick and died. She was in great distress as she wept beside her dead boy. But the prophet said, Give me thy son. He took the dead child in his arms, carried him up to a loft where he abode and laid him on his own bed. Then he prayed very earnestly to God and stretched himself upon the child, crying, Oh Lord, my God, I pray Thee let this child's soul come back into him again. The Lord heard Elijah's prayer and restored the life of the child.

There was gladness in the home of the mother that day.

In the meantime the famine was growing so great in the land that things were at a desperate pass. Ahab said to the governor of his house, Obadiah, a man who feared and worshipped God although he served an idolatrous king, We must go through the land and see if we can find anywhere grass to save the horses and mules.

Though Jezebel, Ahab's wife, had tried to

kill all the servants of God she could find, Obadiah had taken a hundred of the Lord's prophets, hidden them from her and fed them. Ahab went in one direction to look for the oasis he hoped for and Obadiah went in another. As Obadiah was in the way, whom should he meet but Elijah. He said, Art thou my lord Elijah?

Yes, he answered, Go tell Ahab, behold, Elijah is here.

Obadiah was not quite ready to do this. He said Elijah was the one person Ahab had sworn to kill on sight and he was afraid that he would kill *him* should he so much as carry a message. However, he was persuaded to do it. And Ahab went out at once to meet the prophet. Art thou he that troubleth Israel? cried the king.

Boldly Elijah answered, for no prophet feared the face of living man, whether he were a king or not, I have not troubled Israel but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed Baal.

Now therefore send and gather to me all

Israel unto Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves, four hundred, which eat bread at Jezebel's table.

Ahab sent through all the coasts of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. There they stood on the gray mountain side, eight hundred and fifty false prophets, priests of the idol worship on one side and Elijah alone on the other.

With a loud voice Elijah cried to the people, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God follow him; if Baal, then follow him. Elijah took a bullock and the prophets of Baal took a bullock. Elijah built an altar and the prophets of Baal built an altar. Elijah said, We shall put no fire under either altar. The God who answers by fire, He shall be our God.

So, hour by hour, the prophets of Baal prayed and leaped and even cut themselves with knives, crying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. So they went on through the morning, through the noon, through the afternoon until

the time of the evening sacrifice. Elijah said, Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey or, peradventure, he is asleep. But Baal did not hear.

At last Elijah called upon JEHOVAH, but first he drenched with all the water he could find the bullock that lay there dressed for the burnt sacrifice, the altar and the wood. Then he called upon the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Swiftly from the sky came the lightning and consumed the sacrifice and the wood and even the water that was in the trench about it. The people fell on their faces and worshipped God; and then they turned upon the prophets of Baal and put every one of them to death.

And Elijah said to Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and drink, and Elijah went to the top of Carmel and there he cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea; and he went up and looked and said, I see nothing.

And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand. And Elijah said, Go up and say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot and get thee down that the rain stop thee not.

And it came to pass, in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind and there was a great rain.

And Ahab arose and went to Jezreel. Elijah girded his loins and ran before the king and reached the entrance of Jezreel first.

Jezebel was wild with rage when she heard what had happened to the prophets of Baal. She at once sent messengers to Elijah. They brought a warning that Elijah heeded, for he knew the temper and the will of the wicked queen. She was in fact a much more wicked character than her weak husband, and I have always thought that Ahab would have been much more decent had he not been married to so bad a wife as this princess of Tyre. Jezebel in the Bible is like Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare, a very beautiful, very cruel and very terrible woman.

Well, this was what her messengers told Elijah. The queen bids us say, So let the gods do to me and more, also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of the dead priests of Baal by this time to-morrow.

Elijah waited for no further word. He arose and went for his life to Beersheba, a long way off from Jezebel's palace. There he left his servant and proceeded by himself a day's journey into a dark, lonesome wilderness of tangled thickets and labyrinthine paths. Here he sat down exhausted under a juniper tree and prayed that he might die.

You see he was tired out. When a strong man is tired out to the last drop of his blood and the last thought of his heart, he is apt to be discouraged.

Just see how kind our God can be! Dear children, God is just as kind to you and me, many a time and oft, as he then was to poor, wearied Elijah.

Falling asleep under the juniper tree after a time Elijah wakened, for he felt a touch on his shoulder.

He stirred and looked up. There stood an

angel with a friendly face; and close by was a fire of coals and on the fire a cake, baked nice and brown. The very smell of it refreshed Elijah. A cruse of pure water was there, too, and the angel said, Arise and eat because the journey is too great for thee.

He ate and was refreshed, and then he took up his journey in that new strength and traveled forty days and nights till he reached Horeb, the mount of God. There he found a cave and in it, in a little dark rocky room, he hid himself away. Hid himself till a voice of the Lord came to him,

What doest thou here, Elijah?

And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

And he said, Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by; and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not

in the wind; and after the wind came an earthquake:

After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

And it was so, when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenants, thrown down thine altars and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. The Lord convinced Elijah that he was quite mistaken and told him to go and find Elisha, a young man who was to become his successor. When all Elijah's work was done the Lord took him up to heaven in a chariot of fire. He stood with Elisha on the bank of the River Jordan. One minute they were talking together, the next there was a mighty whirlwind and, riding on the whirlwind, came the angels driving a

chariot bright as the sun; they caught Elijah up and he was seen no more on earth for thousands of years. Once again men saw him on a mountain top in Judea. You will hear of that by and by. As he went into heaven his mantle fell upon Elisha. Not merely his cloak that had been worn in the desert, but his greatness fell upon Elisha, too.

XL

ELISHA THE PROPHET

AFTER Elijah had been taken to heaven in a chariot of fire Elisha stood gazing into the sky for a long time. At last as he stood by the waters of the River Jordan he smote them with Elijah's mantle. They parted on either side and Elisha went over the river bed on dry ground. The spirit of Elijah had come upon the new prophet. He met kings just as fearlessly as Elijah had; and he told them the truth when they came to enquire of him. It happened that he often passed through the province of Samaria. Here there lived a family who were very kind and hospitable. As often as he passed their house they asked him to come in and have something to eat. One day the wife said to her husband, This man who comes so often is a holy man of God, and he always brings us a blessing. Let us try to make it so comfortable for him that when he comes to our country he will feel

that this is his home. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, and let us set for him there a bed and a table and a stool and a candlestick; and it shall be whenever he comes that he shall rest there. The furniture of this prophet's chamber, you notice, comprehended everything that one really needs in a guest room. Elisha often used this room and he felt very grateful to his hostess. She was a woman of Shunem, a part of Samaria. One day Elisha said to his servant, Gehazi, Ask this kind woman if I may see her.

When she came he said, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care. What is to be done for thee? Is there any favor I can get thee from the king, or shall I speak for thee to the captain of the host?

She answered, I dwell among mine own people. This was a very beautiful answer. It was as if she had said, There is nothing I want. I am safe at home among the people who love me and whom I have loved all my life.

But, though this woman was at home and had a beautiful house and broad lands and all the money and rich clothing that a great lady

needed, there was one thing lacking in her life; she had no child. When she saw other women with their children she felt sorrowful that she was not a mother. She often thought how sweet it would be to have a little child running about the house and calling her in his broken baby talk.

Elisha divined her unspoken wish and prayed to God that she might have a child; and one happy day the child came to her. After that, the home of the great lady was perfect. Nothing was wanting in it or to her. But after awhile when the child was old enough to go to the fields with his father, one day, under the hot sun, there came on him a terrible sickness. He said to his father, My head, my head! and, I suppose, then fell down and knew no more. The father said to a lad standing by, Carry him to his mother. All day the mother held him till he died. Then she went up to the prophet's chamber, laid her boy on the bed of the man of God, shut the door and went out. She did not tell her husband that the child was dead but instead told him that she was going to ride as fast as she could

to find the prophet and see him and talk to him.

I must run to the man of God, she said, and I will soon come back again. Her husband thought this very strange, as it was neither a feast day nor the Sabbath, but he helped her to go; and, riding on as fast as she could, she came to Mount Carmel.

Gehazi, the servant, ran before Elisha to meet her when he saw her coming and he said, Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?

And she answered, It is well.

Then she threw herself down at the feet of Elisha and told him with bitter weeping that the child was dead.

Elisha said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins and take my staff in thy hand and go thy way. If thou meet any man salute him not, and if any salute thee answer him not again; and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth I will not leave thee. So Elisha arose and followed her.

Gehazi, swiftly running, passed on before

them and laid the staff upon the face of the child. But there was neither voice nor motion, so he went back to his master, Elisha, saying, The child is not awakened.

And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead and laid upon the bed. He went in, shut the door and prayed to the Lord. Then he stretched himself upon the child, touching his mouth and eyes and hands, and the child presently opened his eyes and was alive again. The prophet said, Call this child's mother. When she came in he said, Take up thy son. God has given him back.

There is another beautiful story about Elisha that I must tell you. The King of Syria was at war with the King of Israel. Everything the King of Syria did, or planned to do, the King of Israel found out, and he became so vexed that he accused some of his people of being false. He said, I am sure there is a spy in my court. No, said one of his servants. We are all true men. But Elisha the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. Instantly the King of Syria sent a great host

of people to Dothan where Elisha was and they came at night and surrounded the city with horses and chariots and a great host. Very early in the morning the servant of the man of God went out and looked; and everywhere around them were armed men with horses and chariots. He was frightened and rushed back to Elisha saying, Alas, my master. What shall we do?

But the prophet was not dismayed. Fear not, he said, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw. And, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire about Elisha. God had sent a host of shining angels straight from the sky to protect his servant.

The angel of the Lord encampeth around those that trust him and delivereth them in trouble.

Almost immediately the Syrians began to be blind, under the great light of that angel host. They did not see the angels but they felt the

brightness and groped as if in the dark. In their blindness, they walked directly into the city of Samaria, right into the power of the King of Israel. The king wanted to put them to death, but Elisha said, No, do not hurt them. Give them bread and water and send them back to their master. After that there was peace for awhile between Syria and Israel.

And now I must tell you the beautiful story of a little Hebrew maid.

XLI

THE LITTLE CAPTIVE MAID

IN the army of the Syrians there was a great general who was a favorite with the king. He was called Naaman and was captain of the host or, as we would say, commander-in-chief. He was great and rich and was held in much honor, but he was a leper. No disease was so dreaded as leprosy because it was very painful and disfiguring and there was no cure for it. It was more dreaded by people in the old days than the smallpox is by us to-day. A leper might have everything earth could give, but his lot was very sad and he was shut out from nearly all the pleasures of life. In one of their forays the Syrians had brought away from her native land a little Hebrew girl. She was given as a prize to Naaman and she waited on Naaman's wife. The little maid no doubt was often homesick and wished herself back in her own land with her mother and

father, her brothers and sisters and her little playmates. It was hard to be a slave among strangers and to feel that she might never again see her own home. But her mistress who was a great lady was kind to her and, as the little maid very often saw the tears in the lady's eyes and knew that she was grieving, she began to wish that her master might be healed. One day she said to her mistress, Would to God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy.

Somebody went and told Naaman what the little maid from the land of Israel had said. It was repeated in the ears of the king of Syria, who said, Go to, I will send a letter to the king of Israel.

With the letter in his hand Naaman departed, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of raiment. He presented himself at the palace gate of the king of Israel and sent the letter in.

Now, said the king of Syria, when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have sent with

it Naaman, my servant, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

The king of Israel was very much disturbed. He thought this was a pretext to bring on another war. He knew that, though he was a king, he could not cure anybody on earth of leprosy. He exclaimed, Am I God to kill and to make alive?

He walked to and fro in rage and sorrow and he rent his clothes. When a man did this, tearing his loose outside mantle in two from top to bottom, he meant to show in the sight of men that the case was perfectly hopeless.

One person telling another, the story came to the ears of Elisha, the man of God. He at once sent word to the king, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Send the man to me and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

So Naaman came with his horses and his chariot and all his servants and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. Elisha never came out, nor seemed to see the horses and the chariot and the outriders and the great retinue. He sent a messenger out bidding him

say to Naaman, Go and wash in Jordan seven times and thy flesh shall come again to thee and thou shalt be clean.

If there was anything that was mortifying to the pride of a Syrian it was to be told to go and bathe in the waters of Jordan. The Syrians thought their own country and their own rivers and everything they had incomparably finer than anything the Israelites had. Besides, Naaman felt that he had not been treated with proper respect. He turned away fuming with anger. He said, Behold, I thought this prophet will come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord, and strike his hand over the place and take away my trouble. He felt very much as you or I might if we had taken a journey, gone a long distance, and stopped at the door of a great doctor who refused so much as to look at us. Naaman went raging on. Are not Pharpar and Abana, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? He bade his charioteer turn and drive homeward. But his servants had more sense than Naaman. They talked

together, and then one of them ventured to say very respectfully, My father, if the prophet had bidden thee do some great and hard thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then do this little thing that he hath said to thee, Wash and be clean. Naaman was persuaded after a little, at least to try the prophet's remedy. His chariot carried him along the roads and over the mountain passes and through the fields till he reached the bank of Jordan. He stepped into the river and dipped himself in it seven times, as the man of God had told him to, and all the dead flesh dropped away and his flesh became firm and soft and rosy like the flesh of a little child. He went into the Jordan a man slowly dying of a dreadful disease, and he stepped out of it strong and well, without a vestige of the trouble left. God had wrought a miracle in him.

Hurriedly he returned to the house of the man of God, he and all his company. This time he boldly knocked at the door and refused to go away until the prophet came out. Bowing low before the prophet he said, Behold, I

know now that the God of Israel is the only God on earth. Now, therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing and a gift from me thy servant. Naaman urged this plea.

But Elisha said, As the Lord liveth before whom I stand, I will take nothing from thee. God's prophet did not wish to be paid for what he had done. Although Naaman urged him, Elisha stood firm. Then Naaman said, Though thou wilt take nothing from me, I pray thee give me as much earth of the land of Israel as two mules can carry, for from this time I will offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice to any other god than the Lord Jehovah. There is only one thing that I hope the Lord will pardon me for, that, when my master the king goes to the temple of Rimmon to worship and there leans on my hand, and I have to bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow down myself there I hope the Lord will pardon me. Naaman meant to say that he would not himself worship an idol any more, and yet he feared that, as captain of the host, he might sometimes have to go into the house of the idol the Syrians worshipped.

Elisha understood his difficulty and said to him, Go in peace.

Before he had gone very far the servant of Elisha, Gehazi, did a very mean and low thing. He had seen with covetous eyes the gold and the silver and the changes of raiment and, though Elisha would have none of them, the heart of the servant was moved with longing. He wanted the silver and the rich clothing. So he ran after Naaman, and the noble general, seeing him, stopped his chariot, stepped to the ground and said, Is all well?

Yes, said Gehazi, all is well, but my master has changed his mind. He has had guests come suddenly and he would be glad to have a talent of silver and two changes of raiment for them. They have come from Mount Ephraim and are young men of the sons of the prophets. The whole of this was a lie and it was an outrage upon Elisha.

Naaman gladly gave the changes of raiment and bound two talents of silver in two bags and sent two of his own servants to carry them to Elisha's house.

Gehazi took good care that Elisha should

know nothing of this. He hid the spoil in his own house and, at the proper time, went in and stood meekly before his master.

From whence do you come? said Elisha. One lie always needs another and Gehazi boldly answered, I have been nowhere.

Elisha looked at him with piercing eyes. Went not my heart with thee, he said, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is this a time to receive money and garments and olive yards and vineyards and sheep and oxen and men servants and maid servants?

He meant by this that Gehazi, who had been poor, might now, through his double dealing, possess himself of things which belonged to wealth. But with the wealth there was to come a curse to the faithless Gehazi.

The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee, and to thy house forever, said Elisha sternly, and Gehazi went out from the prophet's presence a leper as white as snow.

XLII

THE KING'S CUP BEARER

HUNDREDS of years passed by and the children of Israel, who had sinned and forgotten God, were carried away prisoners into a strange land. By the rivers of Babylon they sat and wept. In Shushan, the palace of Persia, their hearts were sore. In this palace, as cup bearer to the king, there was a man of noble aspect, one of the grandest men who ever lived. His name was Nehemiah. He heard from some Jews who had escaped and knew what was going on in Jerusalem that the wall of the old city was broken down, that its gates had been burned and that the worship of God was no longer practiced there. Nehemiah prayed earnestly to God. Then, when the time came for him to present the chalice of wine to the king at his table, he appeared before the monarch trying to look as usual. But he could not conceal his grief. It was considered an insult for one to enter the king's presence with a sad and gloomy brow and

Nehemiah was dismayed when the king said, Why is thy countenance sad? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart.

There was only one answer to make. Nehemiah said, Let the king live forever. Why should not my countenance be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste and the gates thereof are burned with fire?

The king listened with great patience and said, For what dost thou make request? Then, indeed, Nehemiah lifted up his heart in prayer to the God of heaven. You know one may send a prayer to God, wherever one is, without leaving the room or going away by one's self. A prayer may be made in thought and will flash to God more swiftly than the lightning from the sky; and God will hear it.

The prayer Nehemiah made was heard. He said to the king, If it please thee, and if thy servant hath found favor in thy sight, I request that thou wouldst send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' sepulchres that I may build it again.

The queen was sitting by the king and I feel

sure that she put in a soft womanly word for Nehemiah. The king said benignantly, How long shall thy journey be, and when wilt thou return?

You see that Nehemiah's good character had made the king trust him. Very soon, with letters to the keeper of the king's forest in Judea, giving him orders to help Nehemiah all he could, to give him timber for the gates and whatever he needed for his enterprise, Nehemiah started on his long journey. He had captains and soldiers with him, both horse and foot. One would have thought that the people in Jerusalem would have been very glad to have Nehemiah come on this good errand. Some of them were glad but, on the other hand, some were very angry. Two persons of low degree, Sanballat and Tobiah, both of them aliens, were very angry indeed. They did everything they could to trouble Nehemiah and interfere with his work. After he had organized his men, and set companies of them repairing at different places, these two men, with some Arabians and Ammonites, did their best to break down the walls as fast as

they were built and, which was worse, they stood there mocking and making fun. They said, What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they restore the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which are burned? Tobiah said jeeringly, Even that which they build, if a fox go up he shall break down their stone wall.

But Nehemiah did not mind these people. He kept on praying to God and building the wall and, as the people had a mind to work, the wall went steadily up. The builders had to work every one with a sword by his side because they did not know at what moment they would be attacked. Nehemiah gave orders that, whenever they heard the sound of a trumpet anywhere, as the work was great and the companies were widely separated, they should rally at the sound of the trumpet. Our God will fight for us, he said. So they labored, and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning until the stars appeared. They worked night and day and Nehemiah hardly stopped for sleep. Sanballat

and Tobiah tried their best to entice him away but, when they sent messengers to him asking for a conference, he sent back a noble answer. It is an answer which we may give if people ever try to persuade us to neglect the Lord's work: I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you? Four times Sanballat and Tobiah sent messages to Nehemiah and four times also he answered them thus. Then they sent letters to put him in fear, and did their best to make him think that assassins were lurking near to kill him. They tried to get him to go into the temple where they said he would be safe. But the noble Nehemiah was not daunted. He said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

In the end the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt, the ancient gates were restored, the old worship of JEHOVAH was established once more and Nehemiah went back to the king of Babylon. No wonder he said, Remember me, O my God, for good.

XLIII

QUEEN ESTHER

IN the days of King Ahasuerus, a monarch who reigned over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia, some strange things came to pass. Ahasuerus was a Persian monarch. The kings of Persia were very strong but there was one particular in which they were very weak. By a law of their kingdom they could never change a word they had once said or a law they had once made. If they made a mistake it had to stand, and this often gave them great trouble because they were as liable to make mistakes as any other people.

Ahasuerus was a very mighty king. In the third year of his reign he made a great feast and invited to it the noblemen and princes of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces and all the great courtiers and fine people of Persia and Media. He kept this feast up day after

day for many days, finally ending it with a great banquet to crown the whole, the tables being spread in the garden and in the court of the palace at Shushan. Everything here was very beautiful. There were rich hangings of white, green and blue, fastened by cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble. The divans and couches on which the guests reclined were of gold and silver, standing on a pavement of mosaic composed of red, blue, white and black marble. Everything was beautiful and sumptuous. The guests drank the royal wine from goblets of pure gold, no two alike. While this feast was going on, Vashti, the queen, made a feast in the house of the women for her friends. It was not customary in that land for men and women to sit at dinner together. In Oriental lands now, in Persia or India or China, the women of a household stay by themselves and never see any man unless he is closely related to them. I explain this so that you will understand something that happened at the end of this feast.

The king, with all his men at arms, his

princes, his courtiers and his nobles, was feasting in the splendid palace garden. The feast had lasted a long time and the men had been drinking the royal wine out of the golden cups for many, many days. Not a woman was present. In her royal house, into which no man except the king ever entered, Queen Vashti was feasting with the women of the court. Presently the king, being confused with the wine he had been drinking, sent to the house of the women seven men from those who were serving in his presence. He commanded them to bring before him and the crowd who were feasting with him the beautiful queen Vashti. She was to come in her royal robes, with all her jewels blazing upon her, her golden girdle, her bracelets, her rings and the golden crown upon her head. The king wished to show her beauty to the men who were with him, for she was fair to look upon. A greater insult could not have been offered by man to woman, or by king to queen. The lowest slave in the wide land of Persia would have scorned thus to insult his wife. Ahasuerus would not have dared so to insult Vashti if he had been

himself but, in every age when a man allows drink to take possession of his reason, he does foolish and brutal things. Vashti very properly refused to come and sent word to the king that she would not obey him. An Eastern king had absolute power, the power of life and death over every one of his people, from his wife downward. No doubt the king felt angry enough to kill the queen at once but, instead, his anger burning hotly in him, he called together his wise men and the princes of his realm. They must all have been beside themselves with wine, or they never would have advised the king as they did. The question was: What should be done to the queen because she had disobeyed her husband?

The oldest of the princes solemnly said, Vashti, the queen, hath not done wrong to the king only but also to all the princes and to all the people that are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women so that their husbands shall be despised in their eyes, when it shall be reported, King Ahasuerus commanded Vashti, the queen, to be brought

in before him but she came not. So shall the ladies of Persia and Media say and do this day unto all the kings and princes who have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus there shall arise too much contempt and wrath. He went on to add,

If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another who is better than she.

And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, for it is great, all the wives shall give their husbands honor, both to great and small.

The king and the princes were delighted with this counsel of the owl-like courtier, and at once letters were sent into every corner of the wide dominion, and into every province: letters written in every language that was spoken in the great kingdom, to the effect that every man should bear rule in his own house and every woman obey him, no matter how little

sense there might be in what the man commanded.

The curtain falls upon poor Vashti. She was probably shut up in some corner of the palace and she saw the king no more till the day of her death. I have always felt very sorry for Vashti and have had much respect for her. She was a great lady who had courage beyond that of most women in her time.

After awhile the king's wrath was appeased. He remembered Vashti and the decree that had been made against her, and perhaps he regretted it, but the decree had been made and could not be altered. Ahasuerus could no more step over that edict and pardon Vashti or beg her pardon than Vashti could emerge from her prison and once more sit by his side. Vashti was to the king exactly as if she were dead. He moped and sulked and was very disagreeable, and all the court people talked about it in corners and put their heads together to see what could be done. The only thing they could think of was to find another wife for Ahasuerus. It happened that there was employed in the palace of

Shushan a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, a man who had been carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, during some war of the Jews and the Babylonians. In his household there was a beautiful orphan girl, his niece. Her name was Esther. When the king's friends began looking about for some lovely maiden who might please the king and become his wife, it happened that Esther was chosen as the most beautiful of all. It was not generally known that she was a Jewess and her Uncle Mordecai cautioned her to say nothing whatever about her people or her race. The king loved her and set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Thus it happened that a simple maiden of the Hebrews became the queen of Persia and arrived at great dignity and honor. She arrived at trouble, too.

About this time there arose a fierce persecution against the Hebrews who were scattered throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus. Just such persecutions have arisen against these poor people in Spain, in Italy, in Russia and elsewhere, in modern days.

A wicked man named Haman hissed scornful words of hate against the Jews in the ear of the king. He was very angry because Mordecai, the uncle of Esther, never bowed low before him, or gave him reverence, when he passed by. He did not know that Mordecai was of the kindred of Esther or that the queen was a Hebrew. If he had he would have been more careful. He said to Ahasuerus, There are people scattered all about your kingdom whose laws are different from yours. It is not to the king's profit to let these people live. If you will give me the authority in writing to destroy them, I will soon make an end of every one of them. And I will gather their gold and silver and pay a great sum into the king's treasuries.

The king told Haman that he should have all the money he wanted and all the soldiers he needed to carry out his wicked plan. Letters were written and sealed with the king's ring. These letters were sent by horsemen into all the king's provinces. They carried orders to destroy and kill, by a general massacre, all Jews, both young and old, little chil-

dren and women, and to loot their houses and seize their possessions. When this dreadful thing had been planned, the king and Haman sat down to a feast, but a great pall of misery fell over the city of Shushan and over the palace. In both were many Jews who had been born there, whose fathers and mothers had been there since the captivity and who were good subjects of the king. Mordecai himself rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, went out into the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry. He even stood before the king's gate clothed in sackcloth, but he did not enter, for no one thus clothed might come within the court of the palace.

Riding furiously, the king's messengers carried these letters of fate to the farthest corner of the empire. Letters like these took the place of the newspapers of our day. The men who carried them would ride until their horses were tired; at some point fresh horses would be ready for them, and away they would dash carrying decrees from the king.

Mordecai did not enter the king's gate but he stood just outside of it, covered with sack-

cloth, moaning and groaning and weeping and wailing. As for the Jews, everywhere in the kingdom they mourned and fasted. There was no joy in the house of any Jew. It was not long before some of the maidens around Esther told her that Mordecai was standing weeping at the palace gate. At this the queen was exceedingly grieved, and she sent fresh raiment to clothe Mordecai and to take away his sackcloth, but he would not receive it. She then sent a chamberlain who waited upon her to find out what had happened. Mordecai sent word to Esther, telling her that her people were in the utmost danger and charging her to go at once to the king and intercede for them. Esther sent back word to her kinsman, All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court without being called, there is one law which is to put him to death, unless the king shall hold out the golden sceptre that he may live. And I have not been called into the king's presence in thirty days. All this was repeated to Mordecai.

Then Mordecai commanded the messenger to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For, if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, there shall come enlargement and deliverance to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed, and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

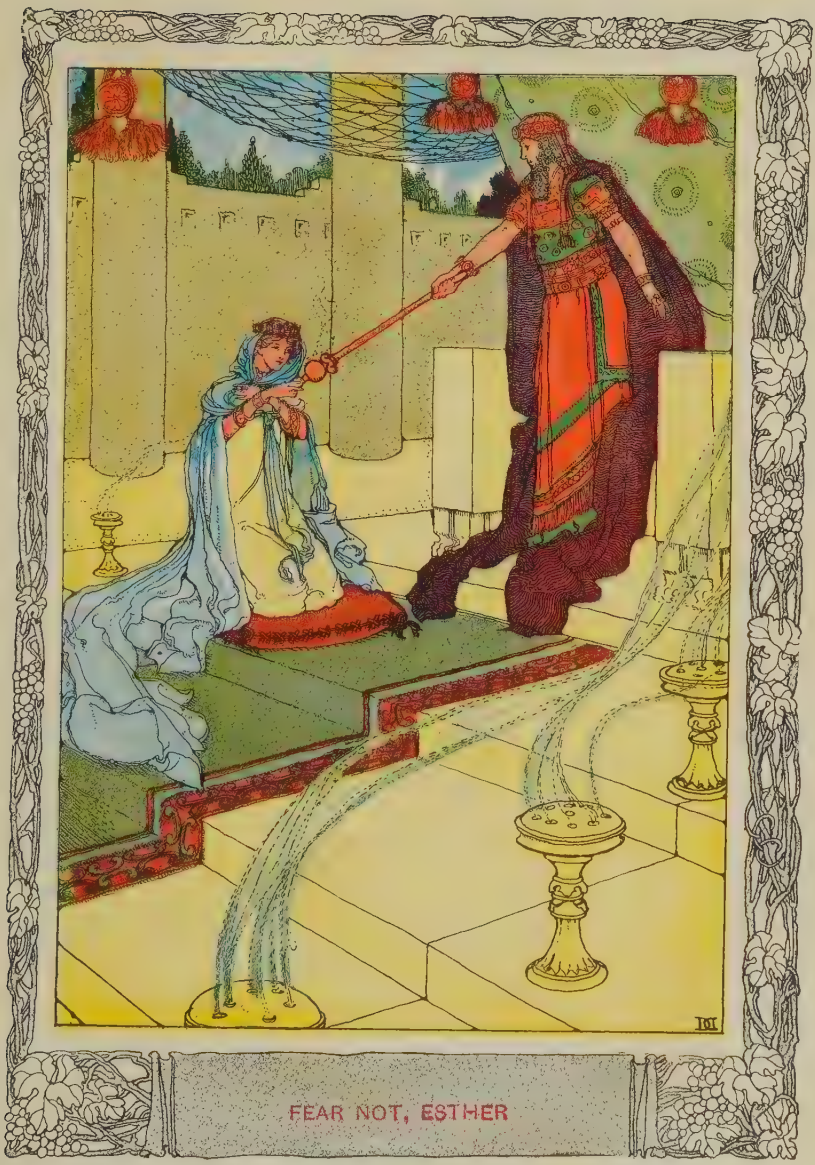
Then Esther sent word to Mordecai, Go, gather together all the Jews that are in Shushan and fast ye for me and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I also, and my maidens, will fast likewise, and so will I go in unto the king which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish.

You see that Queen Esther knew herself to be in great danger. If she offended the king, he might not treat her with as much clemency as he had shown to Vashti. She felt quite sure that in a moment of caprice he might order her to be slain on the spot. Nevertheless she prayed and all her people prayed with her. On the third day, Esther put on her royal apparel

and went all by herself and stood in the inner court of the king's house. The king was sitting there upon his throne and, looking up, he saw the beautiful woman waiting just on the threshold, not daring to advance another step He smiled and held out to her the golden sceptre. She drew near and touched the top of the sceptre.

Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, Queen Esther? And what is thy request? It shall be given thee to the half of the kingdom.

Esther replied, saying that she would like to have the king and Haman, his prime minister, come to a banquet which she had prepared. Being a Jewish woman, Esther had never been secluded as the Persian women were, and it did not seem to her a remarkable thing to ask that the king should bring his prime minister with him to a feast. They came together and were daintily served, and the king said to Esther again, What is thy petition and it shall be granted thee, and what is thy request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.



FEAR NOT, ESTHER

But the only request she now made was that they should come again to-morrow and feast at the banquet she should prepare. To-morrow, she said, I will make my request to the king.

Haman went home that day joyful and with a glad heart, but when he saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and Mordecai neither stood up nor bowed nor moved an inch out of the way, he was full of wrath and resentment. He told his wife and his friends that day of all the glory he had won, of his great riches and how he had become the favorite of the king. Even Esther, the queen, he said, invited me to-day to come to a feast with the king and herself, and to-morrow I am invited by her, for the second time. Surely no honor is so great as mine. I am proud and glad.

Yet all this avails me nothing and is of no account in my sight so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

I wouldn't bother any more about Mordecai, said Haman's wife. It will be the easiest thing in the world to get rid of him. Let a gallows be made fifty cubits high, and speak

a word to the king to-morrow morning and get an order that Mordecai shall be hanged, and then go in merrily with the king unto the banquet.

The thing pleased Haman and he caused the gallows to be made.

But that night the king could not sleep and he ordered some of the men around him to bring a book of records and read him bits of court history so that he might be entertained. It was presently found that Mordecai had discovered a plot against the king's life and had apprehended the men who were concerned in it. The king also discovered to his annoyance that nothing had ever been given in the way of a reward to Mordecai, notwithstanding this great service. The king said, Who is in the court outside? Who should be there, if you please, but Haman waiting a good chance to speak to the king and to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

Haman was naturally at once brought in. The king turned to him and said, as he salaamed before him, What shall be done unto

the man whom the king delighteth to honor? Now Haman thought in his heart, whom would the king delight to honor more than myself? So Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honor, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head, and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delighteth to honor and bring him on horseback through the street of the city and proclaim before him: Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor.

Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai, the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate. Let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

Then took Haman the apparel and the horse and arrayed Mordecai and brought him on horseback through the street of the city and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done

unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor.

I do not suppose that there ever was in all the world so great a surprise and so terrible a disappointment as this that came to Haman. Mordecai in his rich robes sat again in the king's gate, but Haman went to his own house mourning. When he told his wife and his friends what had befallen him, they said, If Mordecai belongeth to the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt surely not prevail against him.

Even as they spoke, the king sent to Haman, bidding him haste and go with him to Esther's banquet. Seated at the banquet on the second day, the king again said, What is thy petition, Queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee. And what is thy request? and it shall be performed even to the half of my kingdom.

Then answered Esther and said, If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request, for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish. If we had been sold

for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not compensate the king's damage.

Then the king answered and said unto Esther, the queen, Who is he and where is he that durst presume in his heart to do this?

And Esther said, The adversary and the enemy is this wicked Haman.

The doom of Haman was very quickly spoken. He was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

As for the king, he could not repeal the edict that had gone forth against the Jews, but very swiftly he sent out another, hurrying it by men on horseback and riders on mules and camels, into every portion of the kingdom. In the second edict, the Jews were commanded to gather themselves in every city and fight for their homes and their little ones, and were told to strike down without mercy any one who attacked them. This decree was given at Shushan, the palace. It put an end to that persecution. The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor in their dwellings, and many of the people of the land adopted their religion

and became Jews. Mordecai came into the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with garments of fine linen and purple and a crown of gold upon his head. Queen Esther was honored and loved throughout all the realm of Persia.

It has been said that the name of God is not mentioned in the Book of Esther. Nevertheless, the thought of God is in it and we are shown that those who pray to Jehovah in times of trouble, and who trust Him, will never be forsaken. It was He who protected His people and gave Queen Esther the glory of saving them.

XLIV

THE MOST PATIENT OF MEN

AWAY back in the early days of the world there was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. He was perfect and upright, a man who feared God and hated evil. He had seven sons and three daughters. Job had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses and a very great household. And he was the greatest and richest of all the men of the East. His sons and daughters lived together in great love and often visited at one another's homes. In all the earth there was no man so happy, so contented and so blessed as Job. It was just on this man that a great calamity fell, and then another and another. It came about in this way:

There was a day when all the sons and all the daughters were feasting together in their eldest brother's house. Very likely they were keeping a birthday. A messenger came running in to Job, saying, The oxen were plough-

ing and the asses feeding beside them, when the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away. They have slain the servants with the edge of the sword and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Before this man had finished speaking another came rushing in, saying, The fire of God is fallen from heaven and hath burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, another came hurrying in, crying out, The Chaldeans made three bands and fell upon the camels and have taken them away. They have slain the servants with the edge of the sword and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. As if all this were not enough, another messenger came running up and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking in their eldest brother's house and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

So, in one hour, the robbers of the desert,

the lightning from heaven and the cyclone had done their dreaded work. The father of many children was childless, the richest man on the earth was the poorest of all. Then Job arose and rent his mantle and shaved his head and fell down upon the ground and worshipped and said, Naked came I into this world and naked shall I leave it. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job committed no sin nor expressed anger against God.

Yet the measure of his misery was not full. As he lay there on the ground there came on him a painful disease, and he was covered with boils from head to foot. At last his wife said to him, How canst thou bear this any longer? Curse God and die.

But the man who was of all men most patient, exclaimed, What! Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil? So he remained quiet and submissive in all his sorrow and poverty.

After awhile three friends came to see him. Their names were Eliphas, Bildad and Zophar. Each of them talked a long time and com-

mented on what Job was suffering. Job himself talked about the past and declared that he had lived honestly and spotlessly before God. He said, O that my adversary had written a book! He felt that he would not fear to take that book and appear with it in the presence of God. The Lord Himself spoke in Job's justification out of the whirlwind. The whole book of Job is full of the most beautiful poetry, but it is too deep for children to understand. One thing you can understand and be glad of, and that is that after a time the Lord sent back to Job more prosperity than he had at first. In his last days he had far more sheep and camels, far more oxen and a greater estate than he had had in his youth. He had also seven sons and three daughters, who took the places of those who had perished in the cyclone. In all the land, there were no women so fair as the daughters of Job and their father gave them an inheritance among their brethren. Job lived a hundred and forty years to enjoy the good things that came to him after the evil things had passed away and he died at last, old and full of days.

XLV

IN THE FIERY FURNACE

YOU have noticed that a great many things happened in the old Bible days to God's people in punishment for wrongdoing. If they had done as the Lord told them and had obeyed His command, they would not have been carried away captive by their enemies. They forgot God, disobeyed Him and, in consequence, they were often in great trouble. The story of the three children in the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar is a story of the captivity. The king of Babylon had besieged Jerusalem, and taken captive many of the people, some of them of noble birth. He had carried away the golden vessels from the temple and had profaned them by using them in the house of his god. Among the children whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away from their native land were four young princes whose names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael

and Azariah. He changed their names to names he liked better, calling Daniel, Belteshazzar and the others respectively, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Whatever their names were these boys remained princely and found favor in the eyes of all who met them. They went to school in Babylon and, as there were a great many learned men there, they soon had a chance to know the wisdom of the Chaldeans who were the greatest scholars in the world. One thing they refused to do, and that was to change their religion. They continued to worship the true God and they would not eat the flesh offered to idols which others in the palace ate. Instead, they lived on simple food and God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; to Daniel He gave wonderful understanding of visions and dreams.

King Nebuchadnezzar one night dreamed a dream. In the morning he tried to remember it but it had gone from him. We often have dreams that we cannot recall after we have wakened. But most of us are not so stupid and unreasonable as Nebuchadnezzar was about

his dream. He raged up and down the palace, saying to everybody, I have dreamed a dream which I have forgotten, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream. He sent and grouped around him the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans, all of whom were supposed to be enchanters and to know all mysteries, and told them about his trouble. Very naturally they said, O King, live forever. Tell thy servants the dream and we will explain the meaning.

The king said, I tell you the thing is gone from me. If ye will not tell me the dream and the interpretation thereof ye shall be cut in pieces and your houses shall be laid in ruins. But, if ye tell me the dream and the interpretation, ye shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor.

The poor wise men were in a very unhappy predicament. What could they do with this unreasonable king who kept insisting, growing more and more angry every moment, that they should perform the impossible.

They said at last, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king this matter.

Never before was it heard of that any king, lord or ruler demanded such a thing of any magician, astrologer or Chaldean. No human being lives who can do this rare thing that the king requires. Nobody could show it to the king except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.

By this time the king had wrought himself into a condition of wild fury and he sent out a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. Not one was to be left. In this sweeping destruction Daniel and his three friends would have been included as they were pupils in the school of the Chaldeans. But when Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, told Daniel about this decree, the young man answered, What has happened? Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Arioch accordingly told Daniel all about it. Fearlessly, as became a prince, Daniel went straight to the king, begging for a little time and saying that he would find out the dream and tell the interpretation. Having done this, he went home and with his three friends knelt down and prayed to the God of Heaven. The God

Who knows all secrets and to Whom all hearts are open listened to their prayer; Daniel knew the dream, related it to the king, and told the king its meaning. After this the king made him a great man, gave him many gifts and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men. The three companions now called Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were made assistants to Daniel and Daniel sat in the king's gate and received honor from all who passed by.

About this time Nebuchadnezzar made a gigantic image of gold and set it up in dazzling beauty in a plaza where all men could see it. It was an image of himself, and a herald proclaimed in loud tones, To you it is commanded, O people, nations and languages,

That at what time ye shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music, ye shall fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up.

And whosoever falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the

midst of a burning fiery furnace. Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and brought accusation against the Jews. They answered and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: O king, live forever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury

commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar answered and said unto them, Is it of purpose, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that ye do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

Now if ye be ready at whatever time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

If it be so, our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king,

that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spoke, and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

Then these men were bound in their coats, their hose, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and arose in haste, and said unto his

counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods.

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth from the midst of the fire.

And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar answered, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in Him and have changed the king's word, and yielded

their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

XLVI

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

AFTER Nebuchadnezzar's death his son Belshazzar succeeded him and sat on the throne. Daniel still continued to dwell in Babylon, but he lived by himself in his own house and did not now take any part in the government. If he had done so, when Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords and invited them to drink wine with him out of the golden vessels that had once been used in the temple of God in Jerusalem, Daniel would have uttered a protest. But the king had not Daniel by his side to warn him and so he and his people went on in their foolish orgy, drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone. The merriment was at its height; the dancing girls had performed before the king and his nobles. There was shouting, there was singing, the lights shone and the hour was full of revelry. But hush! What is this?

Suddenly, on the wall, are seen the shadowy fingers of a man's hand. Nothing else can be seen except the fingers of the hand writing and the king looks up and trembles with fear. Hurriedly he calls for his wise men, begs some one to read the writing and tell what it means. Whoever can tell the meaning of the mystic words written by the shadowy hand on the palace wall shall be clothed in scarlet, have a chain of gold about his neck, and be made third ruler of the kingdom. But no one understood the writing. Not a man could help at this moment and the king in despair sat staring at the mystic lines until the queen mother came to him and reminded him of a person whom he had forgotten.

There is a man, she said, in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods;

And in the days of thy father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods was found in him.

Belshazzar listened and at once sent messengers in all haste to find Daniel. It was not now a youth who came and stood before the king but a stately man of middle age, with

keen and piercing eyes, a man who was himself a prince in dignity.

Belshazzar begged him to interpret the strange writing that the shadowy hand had left on the palace wall and he promised him all the great gifts, the gold chain, the royal robe and the position of third ruler in the kingdom. But Daniel answered, Let thy gifts be to thyself and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing for the king and make known to him the interpretation.

O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom and majesty and glory and honor.

And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, all nations and languages, trembled and feared before him; whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.

But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the

beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it.

TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Darius and his army crept in by the water-gate while the city was madly rioting and the king feasting. The River Euphrates ran through Babylon. The Medes could not break down the city's walls, but they dug a canal and drew away the water of the Euphrates, and bribing some one to open the gate, they marched in on the bed of the stream. So the mystic writing was fulfilled.

In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

And Darius, the Mede, took the kingdom.

XLVII

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

THE words written on the wall, Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians, came true on the very night of Belshazzar's feast. While he and his nobles were still feasting, the army of Darius was in the city, and the soldiers appeared between midnight and morning at the palace gates.

So soon as Darius, the Mede, had taken possession of the kingdom it pleased him to make Daniel his prime minister. In the government of the new king, Daniel took the same high place that he had formerly held when Nebuchadnezzar ruled the realm. Darius often asked Daniel to talk with him and took his good advice. But the other presidents and princes, rulers and governors, the people about the court who had come in with Darius and the other people who had been spared when Belshazzar was slain, were very jealous of

Daniel. They watched him hoping to find something to say against him, to spy some fault, some mistake or some crime. But Daniel was so honorable and faithful that not a single flaw could they find. At last they agreed together that unless they could somehow bring an occasion against Daniel on account of the way in which he served his God, they might as well drop the attempt. They went about the matter with a great deal of cunning and craft. It was the custom among the Persians and Medes to consider the king a fit object of worship. It was the custom, too, just as in the days of Ahasuerus, to regard a law once made by the king as forever fixed and not to be changed. If only these bad people could persuade the king to make a law which Daniel would be certain to break on account of his conscience, they felt sure that his ruin would be accomplished.

You may imagine how cunningly they hid their design from the king, who was Daniel's friend. Entering the royal presence they said, as they made their low salaams, King Darius live forever. They then went on to tell the king

that all the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, the princes, the counsellors and the captains, had consulted together to make a royal statute and a decree that any one, whoever it might be, who should pray to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to the king, should be cast into a den of lions. Now, O king, they said, Establish the decree and sign the writing, that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians which changes not.

I suppose the king was flattered by this homage and did not stop to think what a great wrong he was committing. He signed the writing and the decree. Do you fancy for a moment that it would be possible to carry out such a foolish decree as this in any country, at any time? Prayer is asking for what one wants and every little child who is hungry and goes to her mother and asks for bread, in that very asking, utters a prayer. Every day in the year all of us have to ask for many things we need both from men and from God. Daniel soon heard that this writing was signed but he did not alter his manner of life. On the contrary,

he went into his house and, his windows being open in the chamber that looked toward Jerusalem, he knelt down three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before God, as he had always done.

Darius had not been very long in Babylon. Daniel had been there for many years. All the people in Babylon knew that Daniel never forgot to pray in the Jerusalem chamber. It was not that he did it to make a show. It was simply that from childhood onward he had always, in that place, at certain times, knelt down and prayed. He would not change his habit because of the command of any earthly king.

Under Daniel's window and on the terrace outside his house, assembled little crowds of men, smiling with malicious triumph as they heard him praying and giving thanks to his God. It was the same God who had saved the three young men in the fiery furnace and you remember, do you not, that, walking in the fire with them, those who looked on saw another whose form was like the Son of God? Daniel, equally with the three friends who had been

saved from the furnace, trusted Jehovah and felt no fear.

The wicked men came to the king, bowing and smirking and trying to conceal their triumph. Hast thou not signed a decree, they said, that every man who shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, except of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?

Yes, said the king, the thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which changeth not.

Well, they answered, Daniel, who is of the captivity of Judah, obeyeth not thee, O king, nor regardeth the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

When Darius heard this his heart was heavy. He was displeased with himself, and nothing is harder than to feel in one's own heart that one has made a great and terrible mistake. He set his heart to deliver Daniel from the lions, and he labored to this end till the going down of the sun, but to no purpose. For whatever he said was met by Daniel's enemies with one word. The law of the Medes

and Persians, once made, cannot be changed. There stood the law like a wall of rock. Even the king could not batter it down or find a way around it. So a guard was sent to Daniel's house and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The lions were fierce and famished. Nothing could be expected but that they would devour Daniel in the twinkling of an eye. Yet the king said: O Daniel, thy God, Whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee.

The man who that day was thrown to the lions was much more a king than the trembling man who wore the crown of Persia. They were probably about the same age; both had passed their youth, had lived long and seen many strange things. One to-day was flung into a den of ravenous beasts and the mouth of the den was closed with a stone which the other sealed with his own royal seal.

Long and bitter and cold was that night. The king in the palace spent it fasting and mourning, and he never closed his eyes. Very early in the morning, he could bear the suspense and agony no longer and he ran in haste

to the den and, standing by it, cried with a sorrowful voice unto Daniel, saying: O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God Whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?

Then said Daniel to the king, not in a sorrowful voice, but in the voice of one who has slept peacefully and been refreshed: O king, live forever. My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me; since before Him innocence was found in me, and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt,

At this the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel should be taken up out of the den. No manner of bruise or wound was found upon him because he had believed in His God.

As for the men who had plotted against Daniel, they were thrown to the lions themselves and the fierce lions had the mastery of them and quickly ate them up. Their bones were broken before they so much as touched the bottom of the den. Poor men! They little thought, when they conspired against

God's servant, that they should so soon meet the dreadful death they meant for him.

As for Darius, he made a decree and sent it out to the farthest bounds of his empire, to the effect that everywhere men should worship the God of Daniel. For, said Darius, He is the living God, and steadfast forever, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed; and His dominion shall be without end.

Daniel lived long after this and had many visions of heaven. As he knelt in his room, praying with his face to Jerusalem, heaven often opened before him. He saw JEHOVAH sitting on a sapphire throne, he heard the songs of saints and angels and, once, a voice which seemed to come from the sky said to him: O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee and stand upright, for unto thee am I sent.

So had God spoken to Moses, to Samuel, to David, to Elijah and, in earlier days, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So, dear children, if we do His will and listen to His volce, He may sometimes, in the hush of our hearts, speak to us. We never need fear any trouble or trial if

we are serving God and not thinking about ourselves. No lions shall hurt us, for God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.

XLVIII

THE STRANGE PASSENGER

I AM now about to tell you the story of a good man who was very, very foolish. He thought he could run away from God. The worst of it was, he was God's prophet and should have known better. One day the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Ninevah, that great city, and cry against it, for its wickedness is come up before me.

Ninevah was a thronged city, full of people, full of great houses, with horses and chariots, a mighty army, and every sort of traffic going on. It was surrounded by a great wall. The wall was so broad that eight chariots with their horses easily rode around it side by side, their drivers urging on the steeds as if on a race course. There was a promenade on the top of the wall for the people of Ninevah, and down below there were streets and avenues, and people were forging ahead on their er-

rands all day long. How should Jonah, a man brought up in the country, a man who had lived much alone, go to this great city and give God's warning?

He was very much frightened and thought that, instead of going, he would flee from the presence of the Lord and go unto a place called Tarshish, a good way off from Ninevah. He girded up his loins and took his staff, went to the nearest seaport, which was Joppa, and there he found a ship outward bound. He paid his fare and stepped on board, this man who was running away from the Lord.

But the Lord sent a great wind upon the sea, and after the wind came a mighty tempest, and the ship tossed about on the waves and seemed in danger of wreck. The sailors were afraid, and they began to throw out the freight to lighten the ship. They called upon their gods, but the tempest kept on raging and the wild gale blew harder than ever. In all this turmoil Jonah lay fast asleep in his berth until the captain came and shook him, saying, What dost thou mean by sleeping here? Arise, call upon thy God. Our gods have not

helped us, but maybe thine will. Call upon Him before we perish.

In the meantime the mariners, who were very superstitious and who felt certain that the storm had come on account of some one on board their ship who had done wrong, drew lots to find out who was the culprit. The lot fell upon Jonah, the strange passenger.

Tell us, we pray thee, they said, for what cause this evil is upon us? What is thine occupation? Whence comest thou? What is thy country? And of what people art thou?

He said to them, I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, Who hath made the sea and the dry land. Then he confessed to them that he was disobeying his God and running away from His Presence. The men looked at him in affright. They said, What shall we do to this man that the sea may be calmed and our lives saved? For the sea was still tempest tossed. Jonah said, There is only one thing to be done. Take me up and cast me into the sea. As soon as you do this the sea will be calm. It is for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

The men hated to do this, and tried hard to bring their vessel to land, but all in vain. At last, praying to God to forgive them and asking Him not to lay upon them the stain of innocent blood, they took Jonah and threw him into the midst of the angry sea.

Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. The fish opened its mouth and Jonah was presently safe within it, as in a prison. He stayed in the fish three days and three nights, and there in the darkness of this strange prison cell, such a floating prison as no man ever had before or since, he prayed to God. In the highest heaven God heard him; and God made the fish again open its mouth and it cast out Jonah safe upon the dry land.

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it, preaching what I bid thee. You see it had been of no use for Jonah, like a coward, to run away from God. This time he set out at once and for three days he traveled toward Ninevah. So soon as he entered its outskirts he began crying to every one he met, Yet forty days and

Ninevah shall be overthrown. Day after day, day after day, up and down the streets he walked calling out the same message: Yet forty days and Ninevah shall be overthrown.

The people of Ninevah were very much startled at this cry of the prophet. From the king on his throne to the lowest beggar, they humbled themselves before God and repented and asked pardon for their sins; and God forgave them and spared their city.

One would suppose this would have pleased Jonah. On the contrary it made him very angry. He thought that his message had been proved untrue and, instead of being thankful that Ninevah was spared, he asked God to take away his own life. He complained against the very God who had been so patient with him and, like a fretful child, exclaimed, It is better for me to die than to live.

Still the Lord had great forbearance and said, Doest thou well to be angry?

Jonah left Ninevah, went outside of it and made him a little booth of branches of trees; and there he sat and wept because his prophecy had not come true.

The Lord prepared a gourd, a plant that grows very rapidly, and it swiftly grew and grew until it made a screen for Jonah, to keep off the sun. Jonah sat there very happy under the shade of the gourd. But the swift growing plant lived only a day and withered in a night. And after it had faded the sun came out with great strength and the east wind blew, and Jonah fainted in the heat and again said, O that I might die. It is better for me to die than to live.

And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry, for the gourd?

Yes, said Jonah, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

But the Lord said, Thou hadst pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not spare Ninevah, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand little children, and also much cattle?

This story of Jonah teaches us that God is more merciful than man. The whole Bible is full of the loving kindness of our God. It has been shown, filling with light these stories of

the Old Testament. We shall find it again in the other stories that are to come, and that tell us still further of God's great love.

STORIES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT.

XLIX

THE COMING OF THE CHRIST-CHILD

WE have reached the most beautiful story of all. The world had been dark and sad. There had been little light to cheer it and little gladness anywhere for a long time when our Lord was born in Bethlehem. Babylon and Ninevah had passed away, Greece had conquered the world, and Alexander the Great had wept that there were no more worlds to conquer. In turn, the power of Greece had waned and Rome became triumphant over land and sea. When Jesus Christ was born Judea was a province of Rome. The priests still ministered in the Temple, but there was no sovereign in Judea except Herod who was a prince paying tribute to the Roman Emperor. Herod was a cruel and wicked man, and the men and women of his house were all, without one exception, as bad as bad could be.

Jerusalem was full of people. Romans were there serving under the conquering eagle. Greeks, who were the scholars of the time,

were there; traders, tourists and adventurers from every part of the globe that was then known found Jerusalem a place to which they loved to resort.

It occurred to Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, that this was the time of times when he ought to tax all the inhabitants of his realm; so he sent word to Judea that the different families must return to their native villages so that they might there have their names registered and from those places pay taxes. Obeying this order, a man named Joseph set out with his young wife, Mary, to go to the little town of Bethlehem in Judea that there they might live for awhile in the old home of their tribe.

Both Joseph and Mary belonged to the tribe of Judah and were directly descended from David the king. Soon after they arrived in Bethlehem the little Child of Mary was born. Though prophets, many centuries before He came, had foretold His birth, He was not born in a palace. Never on earth was a little child born in a lowlier home. Indeed, Jesus was not born in a home at all, for there was no

room in the inn at Bethlehem for Mary his mother to lay her head, and she brought forth her first born son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born in a stable and laid in a manger. No little child of earth was ever poorer than this. But wonderful things happened on the night when Jesus was born. There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks. The night was very still. Suddenly the shepherds saw a great light above them as if the heavens were opened and, looking up, there were crowds of bright angels leaning down from the sky. One mighty angel said to the shepherds, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Suddenly, the multitude of the heavenly host behind this herald angel began to sing in tones sweeter than earth had ever heard: Glory to

God in the Highest and on earth Peace, Goodwill toward men.

After the angels had gone away and the doors of heaven had closed, the shepherds said to one another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. They went with haste, running as fast as they could across the dewy fields in the early morning, and they found Mary and Joseph and the Babe lying in a manger. No wonder they told every one they met about the song they had heard and the glory of the angels in the sky.

A little time before this, we are told, three wise men, kings in their own country, which was very far away, had seen a strange star in the eastern sky. They had watched the Star and had determined to go wherever it led them. So, with a train of their people, they had mounted their camels and had fared many miles across the desert, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His Star in the east and are come to worship Him.

Throughout the long journey the Star led them till it stood in the sky over the place where the young Child was. When they saw the Star standing there they knew they had found the right spot and, soon after the shepherds, they came into the stable where Mary held her little Child. They bowed low, with their faces to the earth, and worshipped Him and, from the treasures they had brought, they presented to Him precious gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

The coming of these wise men was so remarkable that tidings of it were soon carried to Herod, the wicked king. He was very much troubled and annoyed because of that saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? He pretended to the wise men that he wanted to know all about the king, when they found him, so that he, too, might go and worship him, but God warned them in a dream, and they went back to their own country by another way. Then Herod, in order that he might kill this little Child, whoever He might be, did the most infamous thing his cruel heart could think of. He sent forth soldiers and

slew all the little children in Bethlehem from two years old and under, thinking that, in murdering these innocent infants, he would surely kill the little Child the wise men had come so far to seek.

Many dear little children were slain and many mothers mourned and wept. But Mary and her Child had been taken safe to Egypt. An angel had appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, Arise, take the young Child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.

He was there until the death of Herod. Before this flight into Egypt, Jesus had been taken to the Temple, as was the custom of all devout Hebrew parents, and there He had been circumcised and a sacrifice offered according to the law. Rich people sacrificed a lamb. Poor people offered a pair of turtle doves. For Jesus, the doves were the offering.

Two old people, Simeon an aged prophet and Anna a prophetess of a great age, gave thanks to God when they looked on this little Child.

In due time Joseph and Mary returned to their own city Nazareth, where the childhood of Jesus was spent. There He grew strong and beautiful, and the grace of God was with Him. Every year at the feast of the Passover His parents went to Jerusalem. When Jesus was twelve years old, they took Him with them. Jewish boys were supposed to be old enough at twelve to worship with the men who fulfilled the rites of religion. They stayed in Jerusalem till the feast was over and, when they left to go home again as there was a large company of kindred and friends, they did not at first notice that Jesus was not with them. He had stayed behind in Jerusalem. They went a whole day's journey before they missed Him, then they turned back to see what had become of their Boy. It was after three days when they came upon this Child of twelve in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the learned doctors, listening to them and asking them questions. These grave rabbis were astonished at His understanding and answers.

His mother said to Jesus, tenderly, Son, Why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold,

we have sought thee, sorrowing. And He said unto her, How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?

Mary did not understand what He meant. I think He did not wholly understand it Himself; but He went down with His mother and Joseph to Nazareth and was subject to them, a sweet, loving, obedient son.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

He lived in Nazareth through the years between twelve and thirty, working with Joseph in the carpenter's shop, going to the synagogue on the seventh day of the week, and learning by heart much that was written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. We can see what great honor Jesus put upon work, the hard work of men's hands, when He Who was the Child of God handled the tools of the carpenter, made yokes for the oxen and chairs and tables and everything that a carpenter made. We may be sure that He never did poor work, that everything Jesus touched was finished all through just in the

HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS

best way He could do it. During those quiet years He was getting ready, little by little, for a life more full of toil in other ways than ever man lived on this earth.

When Jesus was thirty years old He came away from Nazareth where he had been so long hidden. At this time John the Baptist had appeared, preaching in the wilderness of Judea; John was the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth who were cousins of Mary the mother of Jesus. John had lived much alone and had thought a great deal about duty to God and man. His office was to be a forerunner of Christ. When a great king goes anywhere on a visit, somebody sets out a few days in advance to make all things ready for him. A man who does this is called a herald or an ambassador. John the Baptist in the New Testament is a good deal like Elijah in the Old. He was dressed in a rough cloak of camel's hair fastened with a leathern girdle, and he did not care very much about luxuries and dainties. His food was what the desert gave him, locusts and wild honey. He came out of the wilderness crying with a mighty

voice, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

You remember, when Jonah went to Nineveh so much against his will, he cried out, Yet forty days and Ninevah shall be destroyed.

John had a different message. He cried, Leave your sins, be sorry for them, and begin a new life, because the kingdom of heaven is coming here to you. I, indeed, baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Crowds of people out of the cities, out of Jerusalem, out of the villages and from the fishing banks, came to John, heard him preach, confessed their sins and were baptized. He was not afraid of anybody. He looked the proudest people in the face and told them that they were sinners and must flee from the wrath to come.

One day when John was baptizing there came to him a man with a face of heavenly majesty and strange sweetness. He stepped forth from the crowd to the water's edge and

asked John to baptize Him. But John forbade Him saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee; and comest Thou to me?

John knew as he looked at Him that He was the Holy One of God. Jesus answered and said to him, Let it be so. It becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. And so Jesus was baptized in the Jordan. As He came up out of the water, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending upon Him, softly, like a dove. And, lo, a voice from heaven came, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

A very little while after this baptism Jesus went alone into the wilderness, fasted there forty days and forty nights, praying to God. At the end of the forty days He began to feel faint and hungry. Then came the tempter to Him saying, If thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread.

But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The tempter next took Him into the Holy City and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple,

saying to Him, If Thou be the Son of God cast thyself down. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Again the devil took Him up into an exceeding high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them and said, All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

But Jesus answered, Get thee hence Satan. For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

After this, the tempter left Him, and angels from heaven came and ministered to Him.

Children cannot understand much about this trying hour of Jesus. As people grow older they know better what it means, but there is one thing the youngest child can understand. If evil thoughts come into your heart and you are tempted to do wrong, to be selfish, to be proud, to trample upon other people or to do anything mean, answer the evil

thought with some word from God's book. Jesus every time answered the tempter with a word that was in the Scriptures, some word that he had learned by heart when He was a little child or a youth working at the carpenter's bench in Nazareth.

From this time Jesus began to teach and to preach. Walking by the Sea of Galilee He saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, fishing in the sea; their little boat and their nets were there, for they were fishermen, and He stopped and spoke to them. Follow Me, He said, and I will make you fishers of men.

At once they left their nets and followed Him. He went a little farther on and He saw two other men, brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebidee; they too were in a little boat with their father mending their nets. And they left the boat and their father and followed Jesus.

The next day He found Philip of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter, and said to him, Follow thou me. Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, Come and see one of Whom Moses

in the Law and Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathaniel said, doubtingly, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

Philip said to him, Come and see.

When Jesus saw him coming, He said, Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile.

Nathaniel said to Him, Whence knowest thou me?

Jesus said, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

Instantly Nathaniel answered, Master, thou art the Son of God. Thou art the King of Israel. And Jesus said, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, dost thou believe? Thou shalt see greater things than these.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

So the kingdom began. Jesus went about all Galilee, sometimes teaching in the synagogues which were the churches of those days, sometimes preaching in the fields or from a lit-

tle boat, often making sick people well and bad people good, everywhere doing kind things and making the world happy. In His first sermon He said:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

If you will read the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew you will see what a wonderful sermon Jesus preached as He sat on the mountain top which was His pulpit.

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WONDERFUL DEEDS OF JESUS

THE Christ Child's coming to earth when the angels sang in the midnight and the Star in the East guided the pilgrims to the manger was wonderful beyond words. But yet more wonderful were the deeds of love and kindness that kept springing up like flowers in His earthly path, after He began to preach and teach among the people of the Holy Land. To this day we call Palestine the Holy Land because Jesus the Christ once lived there and trod its hills and vales, sailed upon its little lake and often stood beside its foaming river.

After Jesus had called to Him Andrew and Peter, John and James, Philip and Nathaniel, He went home for awhile to stay with His mother in Galilee. These were the last days when Jesus had a home. From the time He left the carpenter's shop and the humble house of

Joseph and Mary, He never had a roof that He could call His own. He said, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.

While He was tarrying with His mother, a wedding took place in the neighborhood. Weddings are joyful occasions. Our Lord never stayed away from a house of joy or cast any shadow upon a feast. He and His disciples were invited to the marriage and they went. By some mistake the giver of the feast had not provided enough of the wine of the country which was the common drink of old and young. It troubled the mother of Jesus to see her host and hostess disturbed and she already had made up her mind that her son could do almost anything He chose. She said to Him softly, in an undertone, These good friends of ours are much distressed for they have no more wine and it is not time for the company to break up yet.

He looked at her half reprovingly and said, Why ask me? What have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. I think He meant

that He was not yet ready to do any of the wonderful things that later He did.

His mother read in His loving eyes something that made her say to the servants standing about, Do whatever my Son shall bid you, no matter what it is. Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.

There were arranged near by six large jars of stone used for various things in the house, each holding some gallons of water. Jesus said to the servants, Fill those jars with water. They poured in water until it reached the brim of the jars. Then Jesus said, Draw out, now, and carry the vessels to the ruler of the feast.

It was crystal water that was poured into the stone jars but what they drew out was ruby wine. The ruler of the feast tasted it and could not imagine where it had come from, but he knew it was better by far than any wine he had tasted before. He said in surprise to the bridegroom, The best wine has been kept until now. This was the first wonder work of Jesus in Galilee.

He turned common water into the sweetest,

most fragrant wine; so, for you and me, dear children, He can ever make common joys precious and beautiful.

Not very long after this Jesus went into the house of Peter, His disciple, and there He found the mother of Peter's wife, tossing on her bed and burning up with fever. He went to her bedside, laid His cool hand on her hot one and in a moment the fever left her and she was well, so well that she went about the house and waited on the others.

In the eventide many poor people who were possessed by evil spirits were brought to Him and He restored them to their right mind. In ancient days Isaiah the prophet had said, that when the Son of God should come, He would take away our sicknesses and heal our diseases. Jesus fulfilled this promise made of old.

The great crowds so closed in about Christ and His disciples that they had no time to eat or sleep. So they took a little boat and went out upon the sea and Jesus, with His head on a pillow, lay down and fell asleep. The Sea of Galilee may be calm one hour and tossed with tempests the next. A great storm arose. The

ship rocked about and seemed as if it would sink beneath the waves, but Jesus still slept. Then the disciples came and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us. We perish. He said, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?

Then He spoke to the winds and the sea and said, Peace, be still. And the waves ceased their turmoil and the winds their clamor.

I cannot tell you about all the people that Jesus restored to health when they were ill. A man would be brought to Him shaking with the palsy, and Jesus would say to Him, Arise, take up thy bed and walk. The man would get up and, rolling together the mat which was his bed, would carry it away, though he had not walked a step in many years.

Once some people who wanted a friend to be healed of his disease carried him up the little outside stairway to the roof of a house within which Jesus was teaching. They let down the man through the roof, which they took apart for the purpose, and he was laid at the feet of Jesus. Not only did Jesus restore him to health but He also forgave his sins.

One of the sweetest stories of what Jesus

did is that sweet story of a little girl whose father was a ruler. The ruler's name was Jairus. Jesus came down the road followed as usual by great throngs of people. The father, anxious that his little ailing daughter might be saved, pushed the people aside and, falling down before Jesus, clasped His feet. Over and over again he said, My dear little daughter is at the point of death. I pray Thee come and lay Thy hands on her that she may be healed, and she shall live.

Jesus went with him. He never refused to go to a house of sorrow any more than to a house of joy. While He was going a woman who had been ill for twelve years and whom no doctors had been able to cure, came behind Jesus, put out her hand and timidly touched the edge of the hem of His garment. She said, If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be well. You see she had great faith. Although the crowd was pressing Him on every side, Jesus felt this timid touch. He turned and said, Who touched me? The disciples answered, Why, Master, everybody has touched Thee. The crowd is great, the people are pushed

against Thee. Why dost Thou say, Who touched Me?

Somebody touched Me, said Jesus, for virtue has gone out of Me. He looked about to see who it was that had been healed, and the woman, fearing and trembling, knelt down and told Him the truth.

Daughter, He said to her, Thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace. Her twelve years of pain and suffering were over. Just then a man came running from the ruler's house exclaiming, Thy daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Master any more.

Ah, said Jesus to the ruler, Be not afraid; only believe.

He left the crowd and went to the ruler's house, letting no one go in with Him except Peter, James and John. All around there were women weeping and wailing. But Jesus said to them, Why make ye this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead, but asleep. They did not believe this and they laughed Him to scorn. But He put them all out and, with the father and mother of the child and His three favorite disciples, entered the room where she

was lying. She lay there on her little bed, white and still like a broken lily. Jesus took her by the hand and said, Daughter, I say unto thee, arise. She opened her eyes, sat up and walked, for she was twelve years old.

Twice again did Jesus raise the dead to life. He met a funeral train coming out of a city called Nain. On a bier was the body of a young man who was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. He pitied the poor mourning mother, spoke to her son, and his soul came back to him; he went home living and strong and well.

Some time after, Jesus raised from the dead His friend Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary. I will tell you about these sisters in another chapter.

Lazarus lay in a rocky tomb and all his friends were mourning and weeping. His grave was a cave and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. It was taken away. Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and prayed to His Father and then cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth; and he that was dead came forth and lived after that for

years among His friends. It was then that Jesus said, before He had raised Lazarus, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. It was before He raised Lazarus that we are told that Jesus wept.

There were a great many blind people in the Holy Land. It was a very hot country and the sun beat down with a fierce glare. People did not know much about taking care of their eyes and their health, and many of them were very poor. A blind beggar named Bartimeus one day pressed through the crowd to Jesus and said, Lord give me back my sight. And Jesus gave it him. More wonderful still, He gave sight to a man who had been born blind, and continually He gave hearing to the deaf. No one ever came to Jesus in great need who was refused.

An evil disease called leprosy was very prevalent then. A man who had the leprosy was not allowed to live with other people, nor could he stay in his own home with his brothers and sisters, his father and mother. He

had to live in the desert and sometimes, as people walked the highway, they would hear a leper at the side of the road crying out, I am unclean! I am unclean! Do not come near me. The lepers held out boxes on the end of long sticks, and kind people dropped coins into them. Many a time Jesus gave the lepers healing. With a single word He made them well. I am sorry to tell you that often they forgot to thank Him. Once, when He healed ten lepers, only one came back to offer Him praise. No wonder Jesus said sorrowfully, Where are the nine?

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OTHER KIND AND LOVING ACTS

AS often as the sunset returned, crowds of people came bringing their friends who were ill, the old grandmother and grandfather, the cripples, the children who were afflicted with any disease, that Jesus might heal them. Our dear Lord had very little time to be alone. Sometimes He went away to a desert place and stayed there. Sometimes He went into the mountains and remained by Himself all night in prayer. There were a great many evil spirits in the world during the time of Christ's ministry, and often they would contrive to steal into people and possess them and make them do wicked deeds. Jesus could cast these evil spirits out with a word. Sometimes they would cry out, saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God.

All through the week Jesus was busy every minute and, when the Sabbath came, He

would go into the synagogues or churches and teach the people. One day He was standing beside the Sea of Galilee, and saw two boats near the shore. The fishermen had gone out in them and were washing their nets. One of these little boats belonged to Peter, and Jesus stepped into it and asked him to go out a little way from the land. He sat down on the deck and spoke to the people on the shore. After awhile He said to Peter, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught. But Peter said, Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing. Nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the net.

No sooner had they done this than the net enclosed a great multitude of fishes, so many that their net broke. They beckoned to their partners to come with the other boat and help them bring their catch to land. There were so many fish that both boats were heavily loaded with all they could carry. Peter and those who were with him were astonished at the draught of fishes which they had taken. Once more they realized that they were in the

presence of One Who could do anything He wished and Who was not a mere man like themselves. Simon Peter fell down at Jesus' feet saying, Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord. By this he meant that he felt himself not worthy to be close to One so great and so good as Jesus. Jesus answered, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

In some great gallery of paintings you may see a picture by Raphael which shows you the Sea of Galilee, with a strip of beach in front, the crowds on the farther shore and, in the foreground, two boats; in one are Peter and Andrew with our Lord, while in the other are James and John. The fishermen are tugging at the laden nets. Jesus, with a look on His face that has the brightness of heaven, surveys the scene. We must never forget in our lives that nothing is impossible with God; though we may toil a long time without Him to help us, and gain nothing, the moment we have His help we may expect to gain everything.

Soon after this, as Jesus was walking in a crowded street one day, He saw a publican

named Matthew sitting at the receipt of customs. Publicans were appointed by the Roman Empire to collect the taxes which were levied on the Jews. The taxes were very burdensome. The people had to work hard to pay them. Publicans were not liked by their fellow townsmen, nor by the farmers and shepherds, for it was thought that they often grew rich by oppressing the poor and charging more than they had a right to do. Jesus saw this publican, looked at him and said, Follow Me. The man, whose name was Matthew, at once arose and followed Jesus. Then he made a great feast in his own house and to this he invited a great company of publicans and of other men to sit down with Jesus.

The scribes and Pharisees found fault with this and said to Christ's disciples, Why does your Master eat and drink with publicans and sinners? Jesus answering said, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

I must tell you who the scribes and Pharisees were. The scribes were learned men who spent their time in studying and copying

the Law of Moses. The Pharisees were very strict in observing all the rites and customs of the Jewish law. They were not very sincere as a body, though some among them were deeply religious men. Too many of the Pharisees were hypocrites who pretended to a piety which they did not have. Jesus could see into the hearts of men, and He knew whether or not a man was sincere the moment He looked at him. I think when He passed by Matthew He knew, by Matthew's longing gaze, that he would gladly leave the work he was doing and take up a nobler work. Jesus added one by one to the group of friends who went everywhere with Him, until He had twelve who were called apostles. A still larger number were His disciples or scholars who called Him Master, and went with Him wherever He went. But, in the three years of His public ministry, He never gathered a large number of followers, although He healed a great multitude who were ill.

One Sabbath morning Jesus was walking through the corn fields when His disciples, who were hungry, plucked the ears of corn

and ate them. This made the Pharisees angry, for they thought it very wrong to do the slightest work on the Sabbath. Jesus told them, when they complained that His disciples had broken the law, that the Son of Man was Lord also of the Sabbath.

Again, on a Sabbath Day in the synagogue, there was a man whose right hand hung helpless and withered by his side. Jesus said to the man, Rise up and stand where every one can see you. The Pharisees were watching with their jealous eyes to see what Jesus would do. He turned to them and said, I will ask you one thing. Is it lawful on the Sabbath Day to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?

Then to the man He said, Stretch forth thine hand. The moment the man did so, his hand was restored and was no longer withered, but just as if it had always been well.

Perhaps you would like to know the names of the twelve apostles whom Jesus gathered from among those who followed Him and who were his dearest friends. Simon Peter and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip

and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, Simon called Zelotes, Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot. You notice that there were three pairs of brothers in this little company of friends and that some of the men had the same names; that is, there were two named James, two named Judas and two named Simon. You will have to read for yourselves the four stories of the life of Christ that are given in the New Testament, by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, if you wish to know everything that Jesus did and said. I am only culling for you a few stories here and there.

Jesus was at a feast one day, in the house of a Pharisee, when a woman came softly in bringing with her an alabaster box of very precious ointment. She stood at His feet behind Him weeping. You know people did not sit on chairs at the table, but reclined on couches or divans, so that she could easily come to the other side of the couch and stoop down to anoint the Master's feet. She knelt at His feet and her tears fell on them and washed away the dust of the road. She had no towel

but she wiped His feet with her thick tresses of dark hair, falling low to the hem of her gown. She kissed His feet, and then she anointed them with the precious ointment, so that its perfume filled the house.

The Pharisees began to grumble and complain, and the one who was the host frowned and muttered and said to himself, If this man were a prophet He would have known that this woman who touched Him is not fit to come here, for she is a sinner.

Jesus did not need that people should talk to Him. He could read their thoughts. He said to the Pharisee, I have somewhat to say unto thee.

Master, say on, was the answer.

Tenderly Jesus spoke: There was a certain creditor who had two debtors; one owed him five hundred pence and the other fifty. When they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?

Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. Simon was a common name among the Jews, as John and

Henry and James are with us. This Simon was not one of Christ's apostles.

Jesus said to Simon, Thou hast rightly judged.

Turning to the woman He said, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

Those who were sitting at the table with Him began to wonder, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? But He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace.

Weary with toil and teaching, Jesus withdrew across the sea that He might be for a little while alone with His disciples. But the

multitude followed Him around the lake and, when He reached the place where He had expected to rest, there were men, women and children, all waiting to hear the words that He had to say. The disciples were much troubled when they saw the waiting crowds. They said, This is a desert place and the day is far spent. Lord, send these people away that they may go into the villages and the country round about and buy themselves bread, for they have nothing to eat.

Jesus said, Give ye them to eat.

They looked at each other, and at Him, in the greatest astonishment. Shall we go, they said, and buy bread enough to feed all these people?

Jesus said, How many loaves have ye? go and see. It happened there was a lad there who had five little barley loaves and two small fishes. Jesus commanded the people to sit down. You may try to think how they looked sitting down in good order on the green grass, whole families side by side, little children by their mothers, husbands and wives sitting together, friends in little groups. They sat

down by hundreds and by fifties, with little lanes between them through which the disciples could pass. Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes, looked up to heaven and blessed the bread. Then He began to break the loaves and divide the fishes, and as He broke He gave to the disciples, and the little loaves grew to more and more and more in His hands until five thousand men, and women and children to the number of many more, had been fed and were satisfied. Twelve baskets full of fragments remained after they had been fed. This was not the only time when Jesus fed a famished crowd. Another day He refused to send home a fasting multitude, who had been with Him three days without refreshment. The disciples, forgetful of what He had done before, said, How can we feed these men here in the wilderness? This time they had seven loaves. Jesus gave thanks and blessed and brake, and the loaves were sufficient to feed four thousand men.

The lesson for you and me is that Jesus can always make our little provision enough for our greatest need, if we trust in Him. If you

know any one who is so deaf that the world all about him is silent, so that he cannot hear the voice of his friends, nor the sound of a drum or a bugle, nor the singing of birds, so that he lives without the pleasure you have because you can hear, you can fancy how glad must have been a deaf and dumb man who was brought to Jesus. Jesus said to him, first looking up to heaven and then touching the poor deaf ears and the poor dumb tongue: Be opened. And at once the man could hear and speak. Jesus charged the people not to tell this, but the more he charged them the more they published it.

A poor mother who belonged not among the Jews, but among the Greeks, and lived on the borders of Tyre and Sidon, entreated Jesus to make her young daughter well. An evil spirit had made the poor daughter insane. At first to try her faith, it seemed as if Jesus did not want to do this, but in a little while, when He found that she would not be discouraged, He said, Go thy way; the evil spirit is gone from thy daughter.

A man who had been blind from his birth

had his sight given to him. The Pharisees were very angry at this. They had begun to hate Jesus because every one else loved Him, and He was always doing good. They tried to entrap the man who had been blind. This man had been so poor that he had to sit beside the road and beg. When the neighbors saw him walking around just like other people, they said, Why this is the man who used to sit all day beside the road begging for bread. Some said, He looks like him, but it may be some one else. The man said, I am he. A man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash. I went and washed, and I received my sight. It was on the Sabbath Day that Jesus gave this man his sight.

The Pharisees were angry about this. They cared more for keeping the Sabbath law, by which they thought that they must sit still and do nothing all day, than they did about helping people who were in trouble. To the man they said, Give God the praise. We know that this Jesus is a sinner. The man said in reply, Whether He be a sinner or not I do not

know. One thing I know, that I have always been blind, and now I see. They could not make this man, who had been healed and to whom sight had been given, declare that Jesus Christ was a sinful man. In his heart he felt that the One who had done so much for him was from God. So the Pharisees violently threw the poor fellow out of their company. It did not matter to him, for as he was walking along he met Jesus in the way. Jesus said to him, Dost thou believe in the Son of God?

Who is He, Lord, that I might believe in Him?

And Jesus said to this man, Thou hast seen Him and it is He that talketh with thee.

Quickly came the answer, Lord, I believe.

One night when the winds were contrary the disciples were out in a little boat tossing up and down upon the stormy Sea of Galilee. Jesus was not with them. It was between midnight and dawn when they looked across the boiling waves and saw One walking upon them as if the waves had been a floor of glass. They were afraid, but a voice they knew called over the waters: It is I. Be not afraid. And,

as He drew nearer, they saw that the One coming to them was indeed their Master. Peter cried out, Lord, if it be Thou, let me come to Thee on the water. Jesus bade him come. At first Peter stepped on the waves with confidence, but presently he lost his faith and began to sink. Jesus put out a hand and caught him, saying, O thou of little faith. Wherefore didst thou doubt? For Peter had cried, Lord, save me or I perish.

Jesus stepped into the boat with them, taking Peter with Him by the hand, and the winds and waves grew calm.

One little word is repeated over and over, in all these stories of Jesus. It is the word faith. Those who had faith received blessings from our Lord. Do you know what it is to have faith? Perhaps I can tell you. It is the feeling you have when your father calls you, and you run to him, or when your mother promises you something you want very much. You know that father and mother can do what they say they will. You do not think for a moment that they will ever disappoint you. If you are ill and the doctor comes, when you see his kind

face beside your bed you feel sure that he will soon make you well. This is faith. This same faith we must have in Jesus Christ, who came to save His people from their sins and to save the whole wide world. Whatever He has said He will do.

LII

HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST

AS Jesus was going on His way to Jerusalem He passed along the Jericho road. There was a man living near Jericho named Zaccheus. He was a publican and very rich. He wanted very much to see Jesus but could not get at Him through the crowd. So he ran before and climbed up into a sycamore tree and hid himself there among the branches. Zaccheus was a little man who could easily hide himself among the green leaves. But Jesus saw him and, looking up, said: Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house. Zaccheus was very happy to receive Jesus and, although the Pharisees murmured, Jesus did not care. Zaccheus said, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and, if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

And Jesus said to him, This day is salvation

come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Passing on from Jericho, Jesus ascended to Jerusalem. When He was near the little village of Bethany, where lived his friends Martha and Mary and Lazarus, and when He had reached the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples saying, Go into the village over against you, in the which, at your entering, ye shall find a colt tied whereon yet never man sat. Loose him and bring him hither. If any man ask you, Why do ye loose him, say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. The two disciples went their way and found the colt and the owners said, Why loose ye the colt, and they made that reply. The owners were very glad to let the colt go that Jesus might ride him into Jerusalem. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to meet insult and sorrow and death, but this time He did not enter the city on foot. He entered riding as a prince might ride. This was done that an old saying of the prophet might be fulfilled,

Tell ye the daughter of Zion, behold, thy

king cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

Jesus rode upon the colt, and a great multitude followed and surrounded Him. They took off their loose outer garments and spread them in the way so that the steep and stony hillside was covered royally. Branches of palm trees were cut down and strewn in the way before Him, and the multitude that went before and the multitude that followed shouted, Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

So, riding in triumph amid palm branches waving and people shouting, Jesus entered Jerusalem; and the whole city was moved and one to another said, Who is this? And the multitude answered, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

The King had entered Jerusalem. He went into the Temple of God. In the outer court of the Temple He found merchants buying and selling and money changers busy with their money and overcharging the poor who came to buy doves for the sacrifice. He overthrew

their tables and drove them out, saying: It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer but ye have made it a den of thieves. Here in the Temple, even at this moment when He overthrew the tables of those who profaned it, the blind and the lame came crowding to Him and He healed them. Well was it for them that they came to Jesus that day. Only a few days later and there was no one in all Judea who could give sight to the blind and restore health to the lame. Into the Temple courts came the children, crying out with their sweet voices, Hosanna to the Son of David. The chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that Jesus did and heard the children crying Hosanna, and they were moved to scorn and anger. They met together and closed around Jesus with their angry faces, saying, Hearest thou what these children say?

Yes, said Jesus, Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?

Jesus walked away from them, leaving them muttering and complaining; their voices were not sweet like those of the children; they were

more like the growl of fierce lions seeking their prey. That night Jesus left Jerusalem and went to Bethany and lodged there. No doubt He spent the last peaceful night of His life in the home of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Martha, the good housekeeper, who would bustle about and do everything for His comfort. It was Mary who would sit at His feet and listen while He talked of the things of the kingdom. It was under a friend's roof, with friendly care about Him, that Jesus slept before the darkest days came on.

LIII

ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS

SIX days before the Passover Jesus was a guest in the little home in Bethany of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. They made Him a supper and Martha served. Mary had among her treasures a pound of ointment of spikenard that was very costly. She brought this to Jesus and anointed His feet as another Mary had done before. One of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, who loved money very much and Christ very little, exclaimed at what he thought was waste, Why was not this ointment sold, and the price given to the poor?

Judas did not care about the poor, for he was at heart a thief. He was the treasurer of the little band and carried the purse. He scowled darkly at Mary.

Let her alone, said Jesus. Against the day of my burying hath she kept this. The poor always ye have with you, but Me ye have not always. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever My gospel shall be preached in the whole

world, there shall this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her.

Judas crept out under cover of night and made a wicked bargain with the chief priests who hated Christ, to betray his Master into their hands. He promised to do it for thirty pieces of silver. This was the price for which a slave was in those days sold in the market. Judas knew that before long he would find some way or chance to earn this wretched money. In this very bargain there was an insult to the Christ, and the priests and Judas knew it well.

On the first day of the Passover Jesus sent word to a friend in Jerusalem, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover in thy house with My disciples.

At evening the twelve sat around the Master in an upper room. They were at supper. As they were eating He said, One of you shall betray Me. They were very sorrowful when they heard this, exceedingly sorrowful, and one after another said, Lord, is it I? Even Judas dared to say, Lord, is it I? It was at this Passover that Jesus took bread, blessed it,

and breaking, gave it to His disciples and said, Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of Me. And He took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood which is shed for you.

This was the first time that the Church of Jesus Christ on earth celebrated the Holy Communion. As often as Christian people anywhere on the globe observe the rite of the Lord's Supper, they are keeping in memory the Lord Who gave Himself, for them, when He died on the cross.

Long before this time John had said, Behold, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

John the Baptist had been killed in prison by Herod. He had borne witness to Jesus as the Son of God beside the bank of the River Jordan. Now there were to be many witnesses who should see our Lord arrive at the end of His work upon earth. When the Supper was over they all went out and walked to a garden where Jesus had often loved to rest beneath the shade of the olive trees. Peter

said, Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I, and Jesus replied, Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice.

As they walked along through the darkness, Jesus said many comforting words which you may find written in the Gospel of John. When He reached the Mount of Olives He went a little way into the shadowy garden, taking with Him Peter, James, and John. He left them about a stone's cast, knelt down and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done.

An angel came from heaven to strengthen Him, as He prayed in Gethsemane, for His agony was so great that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. The three disciples, worn out with sorrow, were soon fast asleep. Jesus wakened them, saying, Rise and pray lest ye enter into temptation. At this moment there was a great clamor, and a great throng of people came hurrying into the garden. They were led by Judas Iscariot, who went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. This was

the sign Judas had given the chief priests. Jesus said, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?

One of the disciples stretched out his hand with a sword, struck a servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. But Jesus touched the ear and restored it. Then He said to His disciple, Put up thy sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?

Turning to the multitude He said, Are you come out as against a thief, with swords and staves to take Me? I sat daily with you in the Temple and ye laid no hold on Me.

I am ashamed to tell you that all the disciples now forsook Jesus and fled. His enemies hurried Him away to the hall of the high priest. Two disciples, ashamed of their cowardice, followed Him there, John at a little distance and Peter afar off. There were no witnesses to say a single word against Jesus but there were found two who were willing to swear falsely against him. To all that they said, He answered nothing. But the high

priest at last turned to Him, saying, I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?

Jesus answered, Thou hast said. Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.

The high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy. The crowd shouted, He is guilty of death. Then they spit in His face and buffeted Him and jeered at Him and struck Him with the palms of their hands.

While this was going on, Peter, who had always before been brave, sat cowering in the court of the palace. A maid said to him, Thou wast with Jesus of Galilee. Peter denied this before them all. He said, I know not what thou sayest. He left this group and went into the porch, where another maid said, This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth. Again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. Fright had made Peter very base.

A little later somebody else accused him, saying, Surely, thou art one of them. We can tell it by thy speech. Then Peter began to

curse and swear, declaring, I know not the man. Immediately the cock crew. The Lord turned and looked at Peter, a sad reproachful look. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Judas, who had betrayed his Lord, tried to undo what he had done. He brought back the thirty pieces of silver, threw them down before the chief priests and said, I have sinned. I have betrayed innocent blood.

Little did they care. They spurned Judas, and he went away and hanged himself.

Jesus was taken by the chief priests, who had no authority to put any one to death because the real ruler of Judea was the Roman Emperor, into the presence of Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor. Pilate did not wish to sentence Jesus to death. He had heard nothing but good of Him. As he sat on the judgment seat Pilate's wife sent him a message begging him to release Jesus. I am always glad when I remember this, because no woman's heart or hand had anything to do with crucifying our Lord. The Roman matron was an idolater but, with the daughters of Jerusalem, she wept when the shadows gath-

ered around the Saviour's head. Pilate offered to release Jesus.

It was customary at the feast of the Passover to set a prisoner free. Pilate said, Shall I release to you Barabbas who is in prison or Jesus who is called Christ? The crowd with one accord begged that Barabbas, a robber, should be released, and they shouted, Let Jesus be crucified. Pilate took water and washed his hands before them, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person. See ye to it. They all answered, His blood be on us and on our children.

LIV

THE GREEN HILL FAR AWAY

THERE was nothing they could do to hurt or wound Jesus that they omitted. First He was scourged; then the Roman soldiers took Him into the common hall, stripped Him of His own clothing and put on Him, in mockery, a scarlet robe. Kings wore scarlet. They plaited a crown of thorns, sharp, cruel thorns, and put it on His head. They thrust a reed in his right hand and they bowed the knee before Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews. They spit upon Him as the Jews had done before. They took the reed and struck Him with it. At last they took off the scarlet robe, put His own raiment on Him and led Him away to a hill called Calvary, where they nailed Him to the Cross. They parted His garments among themselves, casting lots. While Jesus hung on the Cross, over His head, in three languages, Hebrew, Greek

and Latin, these words were written: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

On either side of Jesus were crucified two thieves. Only the lowest and meanest of mankind might be put to death on the cross. Jesus was crucified between two thieves that He might be the more deeply shamed. One of the thieves reviled Him, the other repented of his sin and said, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. Even on the Cross, Jesus had a tender thought for this repentant man. He said, Verily, I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.

The Jews reviled Him, saying, If thou be the Son of God come down from the Cross. Others said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Jesus heard their cruel words and He made no reply to them, but He prayed to God, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Near the foot of the Cross, weeping, was Mary the mother of Jesus, and beside her was John, the disciple Jesus most tenderly loved. Jesus thought of her amid all His pain and grief and said to her, Woman, behold thy son;

and to John, Son, behold thy mother. From that time John took care of the mother of Jesus as if she had really been his own.

Over all the world, while this scene was going on, there brooded a thick darkness, a darkness deeper than midnight, lasting from noon until three o'clock. All was black on Calvary. Out of this darkness, Jesus cried with a loud voice, My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me? Some pitying person took a sponge wet with vinegar and held it up to the sufferer's lips to soothe Him. Others stood by without any pity. But again out of the darkness came a loud cry, It is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.

The sacrifice was accomplished; wicked men had crucified Jesus and put Him to death.

The Roman centurion commanding the soldiers about the Cross exclaimed, Truly, this was the Son of God.

Just as He passed away there was a mighty earthquake. The veil of the Temple, that had always divided the most holy place from the outer courts, was torn in two from the top to the bottom. Graves were opened and

many of the people who had been sleeping in them arose and came forth.

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

O dearly, dearly has He loved,
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming love,
And strive His work to do.

When the evening was come a rich man named Joseph, who was a disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate and begged for the body. When he had received it he wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out of a rock. He rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed. The only ones who stayed beside the sepulchre that night were women who had loved the Lord. But they left when Pilate sent a guard of Roman soldiers to watch about the tomb. Jesus had said that after three days He would rise again. The wicked chief priests urged Pilate to give them a guard of soldiers

until after the third day, lest, they said, His disciples come by night and steal His body and say, He is risen from the dead.

Pilate gave them the guard, the great stone was sealed, and the sentinels paced up and down before the chamber in the rock where the crucified body of the Master was lying.

LV

THE FIRST EASTER

WICKED men had done all they could to show their hate and scorn and the hardness of their hearts. They had turned away from the most loving, the most gentle, the most patient friend who ever came to this world, the friend of every man from the highest to the lowest. Jesus had gone about doing good. He had fed the hungry and healed the sick and taught men to love one another. He had said, Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. The kinder Jesus was the more He was hated by the bad men around Him. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. He was despised and rejected of men, and was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.

At last they had done their worst. Jesus

of Nazareth was crucified and was laid in Joseph's tomb.

He had said, After three days I will rise again.

Nobody understood this. Nobody believed or expected it. The disciples went home from Calvary with breaking hearts. The Master was with them no more.

But very early in the morning of the first day of the week, when the Sabbath was over, the women who loved Him went to the Garden with spices that they might embalm the dear body. The first to reach the place was that Mary who had broken her alabaster box of precious ointment on His feet and wiped them with her hair. She reached the Garden tomb before the sun was up, while it was yet dark, and to her surprise the great stone was rolled away from its door. She ran back hurriedly over the path she had trodden, and met Peter, and John the disciple whom Jesus had best loved, and said to them,

They have taken away my Lord out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid Him.

Peter and John both ran swiftly at this strange news but John ran more swiftly than Peter. They stooped down and peered into the rocky chamber. It was empty. The linen clothes that Jesus had worn were folded up on the couch where He had lain.

When John saw the empty tomb he believed that Christ had risen. But he did not understand it.

He and Peter went home. Not so Mary. She lingered in the Garden, weeping. And again she turned to the tomb and looked into its darkness.

It was not empty. A wonderful bright light filled it. Two glorious angels, all in shining white, were sitting, one at the head, the other at the foot, of the rocky shelf that had been the bed of Him Who died upon the Cross.

Woman, why weepest thou? The angel's voice was like a flute, so clear, so sweet.

She answered, I weep because they have taken away my Lord; and I know not where they have laid Him.

She turned away and, through her tears, saw some one standing among the white lilies.

She thought it was the gardener, when He said:

Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?

She made the same reply with a little difference.

Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away.

Jesus said to her, Mary!

She knew THAT voice! She thrilled at the sound of her own name. She threw herself at His feet and would have worshipped Him. She cried, Master, in accents of joyful love.

But Jesus said, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but go to my brethren and tell them I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

So, dear children, the first Easter Day came into the world.

She walked amid the lilies
  Upstanding straight and tall,
Their silver tapers bright against
  The dusky mountain wall.

Gray olives dropped upon her
Their globes of crystal dew,
The while the doors of heaven swung wide
To let the Easter through.

Mary was not the only one to whom the angels spoke in the dawn of Easter. To a little company who quickly followed her and, like her, found the stone rolled away, they said: Be not afraid. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth Who was crucified. He is risen. He is not here. Go tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee.

There is something very sweet in the phrase "and Peter." Don't you think so, children? For Peter could not forget that, in the hour of the Master's peril, he had denied Him. It was as if a message of forgiveness were sent by the angels to Peter.

Jesus appeared a number of times to His disciples during the forty days before He finally ascended to heaven.

Sometimes He came into the upper room where they met to pray. He entered without opening the locked and bolted door. They would glance up and there He would be stand-

ing, His hands outstretched, His familiar voice saying, Peace be unto you!

One disciple, Thomas, did not believe that it could be Jesus Himself. He was not present when first the Master appeared. But the next time Jesus saw Thomas there and, knowing that Thomas had said, though nobody had told Him, that, unless he could see the print of the nails and the wounded side, he would not believe it was the Master, Jesus said:

Reach hither thy finger and behold My hands and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing.

Thomas did not doubt after that. My Lord, he cried, and My God!

Jesus joined two disciples who were taking a walk to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. He walked and talked with them a long time and, as night drew near, they invited Him to go into their home and take supper with them. As He broke the bread and blessed it, their eyes were opened and they knew him.

Some of the disciples, being fishermen, went

out on the Sea of Galilee with their boats. In the early morning the boats drew to the shore. They had caught no fish.

Children, have ye any meat? asked a stranger.

No, they said.

Cast the net on the right side of the ship and you shall find. They did so, and the net was crowded with the struggling fish.

Said John, the one best beloved, to Peter,

Peter, this is the Master!

Peter threw his coat around him and dashed into the sea to get soonest to the beach. This was always Peter's way.

Wet and weary, the other disciples dragged in their little boat piled high with the fishes they had caught.

On the shore there was a fire and breakfast, cooked and ready, on the bed of coals; fish were all prepared and bread for every one. As of old, Jesus came to them, broke the bread and fed His tired disciples.

It was now that He turned to Peter and said tenderly, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him,

Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walked whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.

Many years afterward Peter died a martyr's death.

Each of the eleven disciples (Judas you remember had hanged himself through remorse and shame) died, in due time, as a martyr for

the truth of Christ except John, who lived to be a very old, old man and fell asleep at last. When John was so old that he could not preach or teach he used to stand in the church on the Lord's Day and say, Little children love one another. He was the best beloved and the most loving of the Master's earthly friends.

Jesus was seen many times by many people during the forty days after the resurrection.

By His command, the eleven went to Galilee where He had been a Child and met together on a mountain top.

Jesus came to them like a king. His last words were a king's:

All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you. And lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. Amen.

As he ended these words, while they looked into His face, a chariot of golden cloud came

down and hid Him from their sight. He had gone back to heaven to sit at the right hand of God.

The eleven gazed and gazed into the dazzling sky. Presently at their side appeared two angels. They had a word of their own.

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here, looking up into heaven? Jesus has gone away as He told you He would. But one day He will come again.

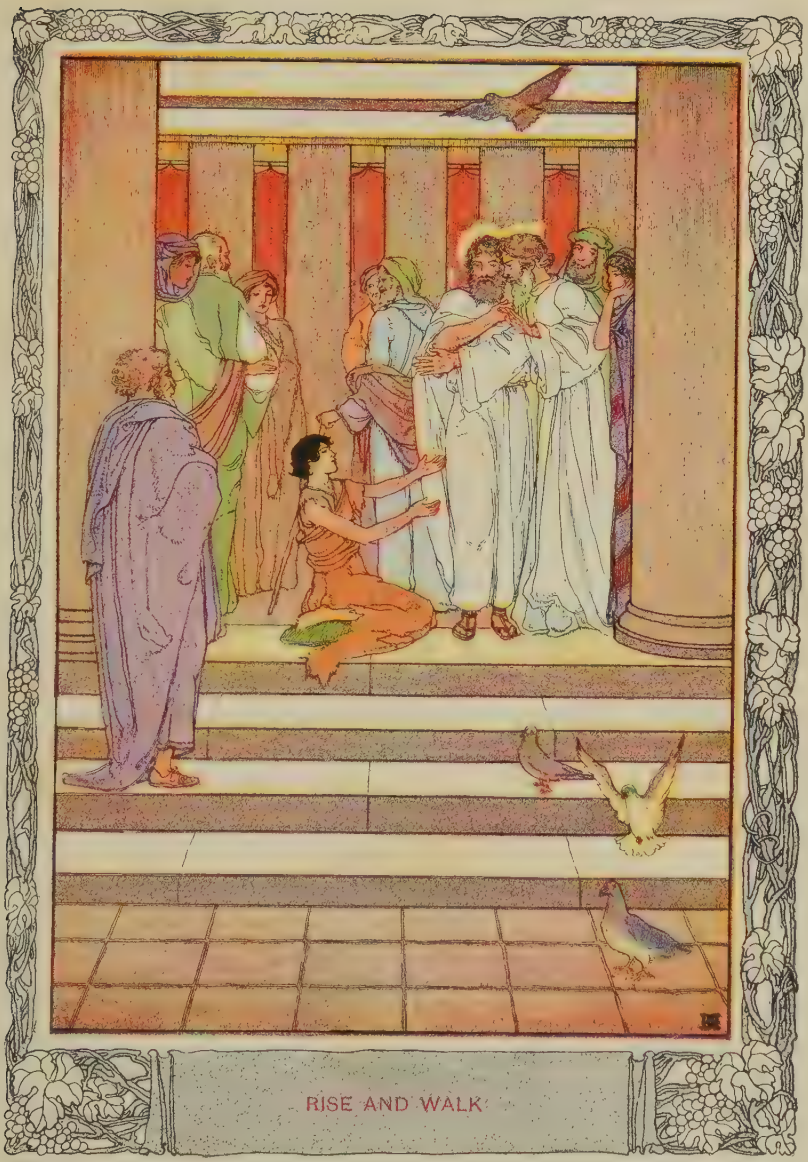
As often as we carry our Easter flowers to church and sing our Easter hymns, we proclaim to all mankind that ours is the Lord who both died and rose again and returned to His glory.

LVI

THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

ALL the disciples who could possibly do so spent most of their time in prayer when Jesus had left them and gone away to heaven. After a time they received from Him Who had gone the gift of the Holy Ghost. Jesus had told them that the Comforter, the Spirit from above, would come to them and stay with them when they could see Himself no longer. For awhile they were so glad of this that they shared their money and their homes and spent the whole time in prayer and praise. Nobody wanted to own anything. Everybody wanted to divide what he had with his friends. They were so happy they could not think much about common life and daily toil.

Peter and John seldom left each other at that time. Whenever you saw one, you were apt to see the other. About three o'clock one afternoon they went into the Temple to pray.



RISE AND WALK

THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

At the Gate called Beautiful there lay a poor crippled beggar. He had been lame and misshapen from his birth, and every day his people carried him and laid him down where those who went into the Temple could not help seeing him. He would thrust out his thin hands and ask for alms.

Peter and John came by. They were tall strong men, brown with the wind and sun. The poor lame beggar held out his twisted hand.

Look on us, said Peter. Look and listen.

So many people never stopped to speak to him! So many never gave the smallest coin! The poor beggar's eyes were bright with hope.

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none. But such as I have, give I thee. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk.

Peter clasped his hand and lifted him up. Instantly the cripple was a cripple no longer. He sprang to his feet, he walked, he who had never taken a step before; he jumped and leaped and praised God.

Every one saw this miracle. Crowds saw it.

The Gate called Beautiful was thronged that day. The man who had been lame hugged Peter and John for joy. He held them fast. He would not let them go.

Then Peter preached a sermon to the crowd and told them how Jesus Whom they had crucified, the Prince of life Whom they had killed, was alive and had done this thing. Peter was as bold as a lion. He preached the risen Christ, and no fear was in his heart.

The priests tried to put a stop to the preaching of Peter and John. They were as full of malice as ever, and hated Christ's apostles as they had hated Christ.

They shook their fists at Peter and John and drew their robes away and haughtily commanded them to be silent about Jesus of Nazareth.

But the apostles were not a bit afraid. They said, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard.

The priests let them go. They did not dare imprison them then or further interfere, for

the miracle had been published abroad and the man on whom it was wrought, a man forty years old, could be seen any day walking about and perfectly well.

LVII

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

I TOLD you about the disciples, in their new love for one another, sharing everything in common. Those who had lands or houses sold them and brought the money to the apostles, and they distributed it to those who had need. Among others, a man named Barnabas, who was very much interested in helping the poor, sold all his land and gave the money to the apostles. Unlike Barnabas, a man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a possession and laid part of the price at the apostles' feet; part of it they kept for themselves. They pretended they had given it all into the common fund of the Lord's people but really, in their hearts, they were deceivers and were acting a lie. It is just as bad to act a lie as to tell a lie.

Peter, looking sternly at Ananias, said, Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep back part of the price of the land?

While it remained was it not thine own, and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God.

When Ananias heard these words, he was pierced to the heart and fell down dead at the feet of Peter. Great fear came on all who saw and heard it. The young men arose, carried him out and buried him. About three hours after this, his wife Sapphira, not knowing what had happened to Ananias, came in, and Peter said to her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? Without an instant's hesitation, she said, Yes for so much, repeating the same lie.

Then Peter said to her, How is it that ye have agreed together against the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband art at the door and shall carry thee out. Then she fell down straightway at his feet and gave up the ghost. And the young men came in and found her dead and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

In every age since then the names of Ana-

nias and Sapphira have stood as a warning against lying and deceit. It is little wonder that everybody who heard and saw this dreadful fate of the two deceivers were greatly terrified. Meanwhile, many signs and wonders were wrought by the apostles and people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches that the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on them. The high priest and the chief priests became filled with indignation. They seized Peter and John and put them in the common prison. They thought they had them safe enough, but the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them forth and said, Go stand and speak in the Temple to the people all the words of this life. What Christ brought into the world was life.

Peter and John went to the Temple early in the morning and taught just as usual. The high priest took his seat upon the chair of judgment and called his council together. Officers were sent to the prison to bring Peter and John to the bar. But directly the officers came rushing back in great excitement, say-

ing, The prison truly found we shut with all safety and the keepers standing outside the doors but, when we had opened, we found no man within. The high priest and the captain of the Temple turned pale with rage and fright and they were the more astonished when some one said, Behold the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the Temple and teaching the people. The captain and the officers brought Peter and John from the Temple without violence, fearing a riot if they treated them roughly. The high priest upbraided them, but Peter said, We ought to obey God rather than men. With the utmost courage Peter told them again the story of the resurrection. They heard it with fury and at first determined to put the apostles to death if they could; but a wise man named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, advised them to let the apostles alone as it was not worth while for men to try to fight against God. So they contented themselves with beating Peter and John, who bore the stripes without a murmur, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the dear name of Christ.

LVIII

THE FIRST MARTYR

ALREADY the people who loved Jesus were beginning to suffer for His sake. Such suffering for Christ's sake is called persecution. The apostles, continuing in prayer and in teaching, needed other men to help them in the care of the poor, the widows and the orphans. Among the good men who were chosen for this work was one named Stephen, a man full of faith and power, who did great wonders and miracles among the people. Stephen was so good and so true that there were wicked men who hated him. They dragged him up to the council of the priests and set up false witnesses who said many things about Stephen which were entirely made up by themselves. They declared that he had spoken blasphemy of the Temple and the law and that he had declared that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy Jerusalem and change the sacred customs of Moses. All who sat in the council looking steadfastly on Stephen saw his face shine like the face of an

angel. The high priest gave him a little while to answer for himself. You may read what he said in the seventh chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Never were braver words spoken by any man on earth, but they did not help him with his wicked judges. He was to be the first of the noble army of martyrs, the first to bear witness to his faith unto the death.

When they heard what he said they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord,

And cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

And they stoned Stephen. As the stones struck him, he called upon God, saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

And he knelt down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep.

Now Saul was consenting to the death of Stephen. About this time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and the believers were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Only the apostles remained there to preach the word. Others fled everywhere for safety from their enemies.

Devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him.

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, arresting men and women and committing them to prison.

LIX

THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS.

THIS Saul who was so furious against Christ's disciples did not know it, but he was destined to be wholly changed and to become the greatest of all the apostles, not second even to Peter or John. Thus far, there had been no one especially sent to preach the gospel of life to the Gentiles. The eleven apostles were Jews, and the first converts were Hebrews who had early been taught the law of God and who accepted Jesus Christ as the real Messiah. All the other people in the world were called Gentiles, and most of them were idolaters. Saul was a young man of noble family and fine education, a Hebrew by birth who had been taught in the school of the Pharisees and was a Pharisee himself. He was a native of the city of Tarsus in Cilicia and was, although a Hebrew, entitled to all the privileges of a Roman, his father having had those privileges before him. Saul thought

he was doing right when he persecuted the church. Not satisfied with doing this in Jerusalem, he went to the high priest and asked to be sent with letters to Damascus so that, if he found any Christians there, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As yet the disciples had not received the name Christian. That name was given to them a little later at a place called Antioch. As Saul journeyed along the Damascus road, toward the oldest city in the world, a city of white roofs and silver shining towers with roses running over its walls, he suddenly saw around him a light from heaven. It was a blazing, burning light, more dazzling than the midday sun and, as it wrapped him round, he fell to the earth. Lying there he heard a voice calling to him from the sky, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord?

And the Lord said, I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Then Saul, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

The Lord said to him, Arise, and go into

WHO ART THOU, LORD?

the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

The men who journeyed with Saul stood around him speechless. They heard the voice, but they saw no man.

Saul arose from the earth, but his eyes had been blinded by the flaming light and his companions led him helpless by the hand into Damascus, where for three days and nights he fasted.

Of all the stories in the Bible, not one is more remarkable than this. Here was a man on his way to kill Christ's people with fury in his heart. He was stopped by a vision of Christ looking down on him out of the radiant sky; by the voice of Christ calling him by name. Jesus had said that, whatever was done against one of his little ones was done against him, so He said not, Why dost thou persecute My people? but, Why dost thou persecute Me?

As Saul sat in the darkness in Damascus, the Lord sent to him one of His disciples to whom, in a vision, this was said: Arise, and go into the street which is called Strait, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul

of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he may receive his sight. Ananias did not want to go on this errand. He said, Why, Lord, this man is a great enemy of Thine and has done much evil to Thy saints at Jerusalem. He has come to Damascus with authority from the chief priests to ill-treat all Thy friends. But the Lord said, Nevertheless, go thy way. For he is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel, for I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake.

So Ananias went his way and found the house and, putting his hands on Saul, said, Brother, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Immediately the blind eyes received sight. Saul arose and was baptized.

Soon after this Saul's name was changed to Paul. You may read all his story in the Book of Acts of the Apostles. He was the first great

foreign missionary who ever went from the home land to preach the gospel to the heathen. He was often very badly treated, beaten and put in prison, but he never ceased to tell the story of Jesus Whom he had seen looking down at him out of the sky. At last, when in great danger of his life, he appealed to Cæsar. He had a right to do this because, although of a Jewish family, his father was a Roman citizen and Paul was free born. Sometimes men who had been born in slavery were set free and made citizens of Rome, and sometimes strangers were given citizenship as a reward for doing services to the Empire. But Paul was born a subject of Rome. Having appealed to the Emperor, when he was tried on false charges before Festus and King Agrippa, they sent him to Rome. Festus was the Roman Governor at Cæsarea.

LX

PETER DELIVERED.

IN the days when Peter had gone up and down the Holy Land with the Master and had seen Him healing the sick, he had not dreamed that he would one day do the same thing. But the ministry of Peter was one of great kindness to the sick, and it even happened that Jesus allowed him to bring to life one who was dead. At a place called Lydda Peter found a man named Eneas who had been eight years prostrate on his bed, shaking with the palsy. Peter said to him, Eneas, Jesus Christ hath made thee whole. Arise, and make thy bed. Eneas was well from that instant.

There dwelt at Joppa a certain disciple named Dorcas; this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

It came to pass in those days Dorcas was very ill and died; her body was laid on a bed in an upper room. Then they sent for Peter. Knowing that they were grieving for Dorcas Peter came at once. They brought him into the upper chamber; and many poor widows

stood by him weeping and showing the coats and garments that Dorcas had made while she was with them.

But Peter put them all forth and kneeling down prayed; and, turning him to the body, said, Sister, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter she sat up.

Peter gave her his hand and lifted her up and, when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

After this he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner. Up to this time Peter had been rather narrow and exclusive, and had looked down from a lofty height on all who were not Jews. But God spoke to him in a vision and showed him that he must call no one common or unclean. From that time, he began working with greater earnestness than ever for all mankind. And when Herod the King, wicked as all the Herods were, determined to vex the church, he fixed his eyes on Peter. He had already killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. As Peter

was very unpopular with the Jews, on account of his new attitude to the Gentiles, Herod thought it would please them if he could also kill him. Now came one of those wonderful ways in which the Lord sometimes delivers his people. Dear children, he can deliver us as easily now, if we are in trouble or danger, as he did Peter. This is the story. When Herod had apprehended Peter, he put him in prison and delivered him to four bands of soldiers who were to guard him in turn. Herod planned after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing by the church to God for him.

And when Herod would have brought him forth for execution, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shone in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise quickly. And his chains fell off his hands.

And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals; and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

And Peter went out, and followed him; and knew not that it was true and real, but thought he was in a dream.

When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that led unto the city; which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

And when he had considered the thing, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the house, a young girl came to listen, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she was too glad to open

the gate, and ran in and told that Peter stood before it.

Thou art mad, declared those in the house. But she constantly insisted that Peter was there. Then they said, It is his spirit. But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go tell these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went to another place.

Just as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, to discover what had become of Peter. It was no small matter to them.

When Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. Then Herod went down from Judea to Cesarea, and there abode.

Notice that there were two apostles named James; one was still living at this time.

LXI

A STORM AND WRECK.

ON the way to Rome in a little ship, Paul was in great danger. He was one of a number of prisoners. They were all guarded by a band of Roman soldiers, commanded by a centurion whose name was Julius. Before long Julius found out that Paul could be trusted and, when the ship touched at Sidon, he allowed him to go ashore and visit his friends.

The sea was smooth when they started but in a few hours the wind rose and the waves ran mountains high. When they came near a place called Fair Haven, Paul, who had more knowledge of what was best to do than anybody else on board, went to the centurion and told him that he felt sure there was going to be a good deal of wild weather and great damage to the ship, as well as peril to the lives of all on board. The owner of the ship and the sailing master laughed at this as the advice

of a landsman and kept right on with the voyage. In the end it resulted, after a very long time of distress and hunger and the loss of all the freight, in their being cast on the little island of Malta. You may find this island on the map of Europe. The people on it were barbarians, but they came running down to the shore and were as kind as kind could be to the poor shipwrecked throng. All told, that ship had carried two hundred and seventy-six men, so that it was a great crowd of cold and hungry people who stood shivering on the beach. The island people made haste and kindled a fire, bringing out food and showing the greatest pity for the worn out mariners. Paul was helping to make the fire when a viper that had been asleep in the cold, crawled out, warmed to life by the heat, and fastened itself on his hand. The island people stood still, expecting him to fall down dead. They supposed that he had committed some crime, had been a robber or a murderer and that, though he had escaped the sea, the gods had sent this viper to kill him. When he shook off the poisonous snake into the fire and went about

as usual and nothing happened, they changed their minds and were ready to worship him as a god.

After some delay, Paul reached the great city of Rome. Here he was a prisoner more than two years in his own hired house. A sentry paced up and down before it, and he could not go out unless a soldier went with him; but his friends came to see him and he could write letters to the men he loved in other places. Paul wrote wonderful letters, full of love and sweetness. You may read in the New Testament his letters to the different churches. When you are older you will understand them and, even now, there are a great many verses in them which children should learn and lay up in their memories.

Paul had many friends; some of them were poor and ignorant, some were scholars, some noble men and women who were in the palace of Cæsar. Though Rome was a heathen city, there were in it many Christians, and thousands of them during the first three hundred years after Christ, laid down their lives. Some were thrown to the lions, others perished in

dungeons, others were burned and some were beheaded. This last fate befell the greatest of all the apostles; Paul ended his life as a martyr for Christ. He did it with joy. He said, a little while before his death: I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day. And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Paul was brought during his imprisonment into the presence of the Emperor Nero, of all the wicked Roman Emperors the most renowned for wickedness and cruelty.

When he said, The Lord, the righteous judge, he was comparing Nero who was so unjust and unrighteous with the Lord who was to judge him at last. He was twice brought before Nero. Of the first trial he said, No man stood with me, but all forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with

me and strengthened me and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

Many a noble head has fallen under the sharp axe of the executioner. As you study history you will find that many good men and true have perished through the injustice of tyrants. Never fell a nobler or a greater man than Paul, the apostle. Though his body perished, his life to this day is a force in the life of the world. It will continue to be so until the end of time.

LXII

A VISION OF HEAVEN

WHEN John, the disciple whose head had been pillowed on Jesus' breast, was an old, old man, he was made a prisoner for Christ's sake and shut up on the lonely island of Patmos. On this island, one Lord's Day, he had a vision of heaven. More than that, he had a vision of Jesus. The One Who had been crucified stood in glory, clothed with a white garment down to the feet and girt with a golden girdle. Around him were seven golden candlesticks, His eyes were as a flame of fire, His radiant feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; His voice was as the sound of many waters; in His right hand were seven stars; and His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength. When John saw Him, he fell at His feet as dead. But the glorious One laid his right hand upon His servant, saying, Fear not. I am the first and the last, I am He that liveth and was dead and,

behold, I am alive forevermore and have the keys of Hell and of Death.

Through John, the Lord Who spoke from heaven sent messages to the churches then in the world; messages meant just as much for you and me as for them. He said, Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and will sup with him and he with me.

He said, He that overcometh and keepeth My works until the end, to him will I give power over the nations. To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth except him that receiveth it. He gave many other promises through John to those who are faithful and overcome temptation.

From that lonely island John saw wonderful things in heaven. He heard the angels singing, Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power.

He heard one saying, Who are these that are arrayed in white robes? and whence come they?

The answer was, These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His Temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

The most beautiful thing that John saw was the Holy City, with its great gates of gleaming pearls; the wall of the city of jasper and the city all of pure gold like transparent glass. He saw no Temple there, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof.

On those golden streets and in those heavenly gardens, walk those who have gone beyond death and live forevermore in great

happiness and perfect purity in the presence of God. In these heavenly gardens no flowers wither. There stands the Tree of Life and there flows the River of Life clear as crystal. They need no candle there, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light.

Best of all we are told that there God's servants shall serve Him. In the heavenly land there shall be love and joy and work and rest and no parting, nor pain, nor sin, nor death.

The Book began in the Garden of Eden. It ends in the Garden of Heaven, where forevermore all shall dwell who love the Lord and keep His words.

Bernard of Clugny has sung for us a song of the celestial country:

Arise, arise, good Christian,
  Let right to wrong succeed;
Let penitential sorrow
  To heavenly gladness lead,
To the light that hath no evening,
  That knows no moon nor sun,
The light so new and golden,
  The light that is but one.

And now we fight the battle,
But then shall wear the crown
Of full and everlasting
And passionless renown.
But He Whom now we trust in
Shall then be seen and known,
And they that know and see Him
Shall have Him for their own.

THE END.

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